

Hermione grinned. If anyone had told her, at any point in her Hogwarts career, that she would find herself in this position, she would have been scandalized, then laughed them right out of the wizarding world. Yet, here she was, doing this, and here he was, watching her, albeit not happily.

“So, Mr. Malfoy, did you really think you could get away from me?” she demanded, walking around his chained body and appraising him.

“Fuck you, Mudblood!” he spat.

“Now, now, Mr. Malfoy, that’s not nice. Since you are chained, and may I add unclothed, I firmly believe you should keep quiet.”

Slowly she trailed her fingers up and down his bare chest, chuckling softly when his body went against his mind and responded to her.

Lucius Malfoy found himself chained, completely nude, and entirely at her disposal. His arms were raised to the ceiling and his feet were spread slightly further than shoulder-width. The room around him disregarded his situation as the dark greens and silvers mocked his position. A four poster bed sat comfortably against the wall, as though laughing at their antics and inability to use it, instead of the hard floor and chains. The lone window was charmed to reveal only the moods of the occupants and had nothing at all to do with what lay outside, therefore he’d get no help from mere passersby. Two doors adorned the room as well; one led to the bathroom, sat up with the grandest tub any wizard could want, and the other led out of the room, but was warded in such a way that very few could even hope to get through the door.

He snarled down at the woman, “touch me again, you filthy little mudblood, and I’ll...”

**SMACK!**

Hermione rose her hand and slapped him hard across the face, leaving a red mark on his otherwise perfect skin.

"I've had enough of that word from you, Malfoy! The Order gave you to me to do as I see fit, and I suggest you start cooperating and showing some respect!"

"I'll never show you respect," he spat, before adding, "mudblood."

SMACK!

She slapped him once more, allowing the red mark to darken slightly before reaching up with her hand to caress his face. He winced when her hand lifted, then grimaced when she touched him.

Her hands trailed down the exposed flesh of his neck and shoulders, before following his muscled chest and abdomen. Grazing him with her fingernails and reveling in the knowledge that his slight moans meant he was enjoying this---not that she'd ever tell him that.

"You'll regret this, filthy slag that you are."

"Ah, you hurt my feelings," she pouted, "I think you should apologize."

He laughed heartily at her before responding, "apologize to you? You must be jesting. I'd sooner cut out my tongue than apologize to a dirty, little whore like you."

Hermione slowly leaned closer to him, pressing her black leather bodice against his chest. Her breasts were shoved up, unnaturally high, and her nipples were barely covered. She knew he like this, as he'd been staring at her tits the entire time, but he groaned when they made contact with his naked chest. Eyes locked, she pressed her lips to his and began teasing his mouth. She moved her tongue against his bottom lip, before nibbling it softly and sucking it into her own. When his lips parted, not because he wanted them to of course, she thrust her tongue into his mouth, seeking out his own and battling heavily with it.

He tried to shove her tongue out of his mouth using her own and slowly felt himself responding in ways he'd never admit. What was she doing to him? Never should a Malfoy be chained and subjected to such treatment, and NEVER by a filthy mudblood like Hermione

Granger. His thoughts were brought up short by the tremendous pain he felt shooting along his tongue.

“What the...?”

“IF you’d rather have your tongue removed, Mr. Malfoy, I can arrange it. However, my methods won’t be as nice as simply ‘cutting’.”

“Get the fuck off me!” he growled. “I don’t want the same little whore that the entire world has already had.”

She roughly cupped his erection and gave it a quick jerk before glaring back at him. “Oh, I believe you do want this. I believe you want me to touch you in ways no one ever has before. You want me to fuck you senseless, like the whore you claim me to be. “You want nothing more,” she said, stroking his cock and making him unconsciously thrust into her hand, “than to have me all over you. To have your cock wrapped in my tight,” another rough jerk punctuated her next words, “wet...hot...pussy.”

When she released his cock he whimpered at the loss, before glaring back down at her. “Bitch!”

Hermione stepped away from him and slowly let her arms travel along her own body. Her fingers trailed across her breasts, accenting the fact that so very little was hidden, before gliding down her leather clad body. Slowly she slipped her fingers inside her black lacy knickers and began stroking herself, arching slightly and moaning in pleasure.

“I don’t need a man,” she panted, “to make me sexually happy. I just like having you around.”

His eyes followed her hands without thought, his nose smelled her arousal, and his entire body thrummed with desire. He watched as she pulled her fingers out, trailed them down her legs to where her black garter rested on her creamy thigh, before watching them disappear in her knickers once more. She slowly pulled them out once more, only this time she brought them straight to his face. He turned his head away from her and pressed his lips together.

"You only think you can resist," she murmured, waving her fingers slowly under his nose, before stroking his lips and allowing the moisture to remain on them.

Reluctantly, his tongue flicked out to lick his lips. After two small licks, he moaned loudly and licked her juices completely off of himself. She held her fingers up to his mouth and he greedily took them, sucking and licking them clean as her eyelids fluttered shut.

"Good boy," she whispered huskily. "I think you should be rewarded for your efforts."

He looked at her confusedly, but she slowly lowered herself to her knees and appraised his hardened length. "Oh, I knew you'd give in before long, but I never thought you'd go so quickly. For that," she said, flicking her tongue out and licking the moisture from his weeping head, "you shall have your reward."

He groaned loudly and thrust towards her. She smiled to herself, before cupping her balls in her hand and rolling them around gently. Her tongue flicked out again, licking the entire tip of his cock before sucking it quickly into her mouth, making him gasp and thrust once again.

Slowly teasing him, licking along his length and only taking the tip of him into her wet mouth, she brought him into a frenzy. He was thrusting into air, but trying desperately for friction along his aching cock. At every thrust, she would avoid him and his ache became increasingly intolerable.

"All you have to do is ask nicely, Lucius, and I'll give you what you so desperately need. What you want so much," she purred.

Head thrown back between his arms, he muffled his cries of "please, Gods please let me come," and thrust into her willing mouth.

This time, she took in his entire length, licking and stroking with her tongue while she sucked his thick cock into her mouth. They were

both so caught up in her actions that neither heard the door open or saw who walked in, and neither cared at the moment.

“Yes, that’s it! Suck my cock! OH FUCK!” he yelled when she cupped his tightening balls and he came hard into her mouth before sagging against his chains in relief.

“Mmm, so good,” she purred again, then looked up at him when she noticed his whole body had tensed.

She whipped around to see what Lucius was staring at and immediately bowed her head.

“My Lord,” Lucius drawled smugly, still trying to get the muscles in his legs to work properly after one of the best blowjobs of his life.

“Why Lucius?” Voldemort hissed. “This is not the way I intended you to bed Potter’s little whore. If you need to be shown the proper way in which to be in control I’m sure I could arrange it.”

Lucius snapped his fingers and many things happened simultaneously. The chains binding him disappeared, his robes were firmly back in place on his body, and all evidence of what had just happened was wiped away.

“I am always in control, My Lord,” he said respectfully. “However, I feel that allowing my slave to have fun and pleasure me at the same time, gives her more incentive to be such the wanton little whore that she is.”

“Do you now?” Voldemort asked curiously, his attention just now falling on the slave who had yet to look up at him. “Tell me, Mudblood, does this work? Do you find yourself wanting the man I gave you to. Wanting the Death Eater that has made you his whore?”

“Y..yes, Master,” she stammered. “I want nothing more than to please him.”

“I must confess, Lucius,” he said, paying no more attention to the thing bowing beside one of his most trusted servants, “we have all

been rather curious at your recent behavior. So very happy you seem now. None of the others have had such success with their own slaves. I took Potter's whore myself, knowing that would eat him when he saw what I did to her, but she's become such a disappointment. Do you even need to 'convince' her of your wishes, Lucius?" he asked, casting another appraising glance at Hermione.

"Of course not, My Lord. I keep her fairly happy and in return, she assures me of my pleasure, no matter what I have asked of her. I find her rather willing to obey most any command."

"And those that she does not?"

"Those, I feel she wants to be punished for disobeying, My Lord."

Hermione had been watching the discussion for some time now. Lucius was absolutely correct. Ever since they had been captured in the raid mere months ago, she had been happier than she could ever remember being in her life. Funny how that worked, how the thing she loathed and despised, actually served to save her from herself. She and Ginny, along with several unknown recruits from the Order, had been taken captive and 'given' to the most esteemed Death Eaters when they were brought here.

Lucius, of course, had gotten first pick. It surprised her, and truth be told, excited her, when he quickly picked her. Voldemort had already explained that Ginny was to be his, so that he could open the connection to Harry and allow him to see what he was doing to his nemesis' girlfriend. Hermione found herself eventually not even caring. For the last three months she had been locked in this room and was completely content. No one without a Dark Mark could enter or leave, and very few even bothered. Lucius refused to share her with the others and kept her busy with books and research when he was away. She knew she was aiding the Dark Side now, but his little shows of concern and even affection, made her so happy she didn't feel guilty. Locked in her own world with only Lucius, she didn't care about those on the outside.

What she did care about, however, was the appraising looks the Dark Lord was sending her way. She knew he wanted to 'try her out' and

found herself quite disgusted and turned on, all at the same time. Disgusted only because, well, quite frankly he looked like a snake. Otherwise, she relished the idea of what he could do to her. Lucius had shown her the ways of sex from a darker perspective, and she found it suited her much more than the fumbling attempts of her past. She also found herself wondering what it would be like with the other Death Eaters. Not many peaked her interest, but the few that she thought about, really turned her on.

“I want you to bring her to the next party, Lucius. Dress her nicely and show off what you’ve accomplished.”

“Yes, My Lord,” Lucius said proudly, knowing the Dark Lord wanted her.

Voldemort whisked out of the room and Lucius walked swiftly to Hermione. “Does that turn you on, pet? Knowing that the most evil wizard of all times wants to fuck you?” he purred.

She looked at him momentarily, then answered, “yes, actually, it does.”

Lucius stared at her wide-eyed for a moment before chuckling, “I’m very proud of you, Hermione.”

“And I’m still not satisfied,” she said, before coyly adding, “Master.”

Lucius threw her up on the bed and began having his way with her.

His hands stroked down her body, touching every inch of her leather bodice before slowly waving his wand and making their clothing disappear.

“Cheater,” she said cheekily.

He stopped his ministrations for a moment and looked down at her. Her brown curls lay haphazardly around her head, her hands gently touching his arms, and her eyes laden with desire for him.

“You’re lucky, you know,” he said after a moment’s thought.

“Yes, I know,” she chuckled, “but I believe you’re thinking something other than the fact that you’re naked and hovering over me. Tell me, Lucius, why am I lucky.”

He grinned down at her, his entire face softening with the upturned corners of his mouth. His beautiful blonde hair hanging down as a curtain to shield the lovers from the world. “You’re lucky, pet, because when he walked in here tonight, I was actually giving you a command that you were obeying. I think otherwise he might have taken drastic measures against us both,” he said seriously.

“He’s your master,” she spat angrily trying to sit up in the process, “not mine. You may force me to call him as such and make me pretend to cower in his presence, but I’ll only feel hatred and contempt for the evil git.”

He roughly shoved her down and stood up, pacing the floor in all his glorious nakedness. He stopped abruptly and glared at her. “I’ve warned you about your sharp tongue, witch! You will do as you’re told and keep your thoughts on this matter strictly to yourself. I have no desire to break you as the others have so stupidly done with their own slaves, but do not tempt me to hurt you.”

She sat on the bed, watching him walk, and listening to his “watch your mouth” speech once again. They had had this conversation many times since her arrival and it would seem they were destined to have this conversation many more times in the future.



When she first came and he had claimed her, she was very scared. However, he had explained to her what she could expect from the house as a whole and what other Death Eaters did to their slaves along with what the Dark Lord expected them to do. He also told her that it was because she intrigued him that he had chosen her. Only she had bested his son at Hogwarts and he knew it was because of her that Harry Potter was still alive to this day. In his explanation, he included his desire to have her willingly obey him. She had laughed outright at this, but he continued on, telling her that it was up to him what happened with her. The choice was given to her: obey Lucius Malfoy's every command, or be tied down and raped repeatedly by every Death Eater that happened to want her at any given time.

She had glared and fumed for several short minutes until he quickly drew his wand and had her unclothed and tied to his bed. Slowly he crawled up her body, letting his magnificent hair trail across her bare flesh as she struggled to get away from him. He touched her softly and openly admired her womanly figure as he trailed his hands up to her face. He grabbed her chin and forced her to look at him.

"This is what it could be like for you, with every man who wanted a quick fuck. Is this what you want, Hermione? Do you want the choice to be taken from you or do you want me to care for you and make sure you're safe?" he had asked her huskily, his erection obvious, but his actions controlled.

His words washed over her and she felt all the heat in her body rush to the pit of her stomach. She wondered briefly what was wrong with her, then, being as smart as always, she realized that she was actually very turned on by a man she swore to hate. He had continued to talk to her and touch her lightly until she was moaning and arching into his hands. With a soft chuckle, he released her bindings and removed his own clothes. After that, he proceeded to show her what real sex was all about, and how by pleasing him and obeying his commands, he would also see to her own fulfillment.

Currently, however, he continued pacing back and forth. "Lucius, I understand, really I do, but you have to know this isn't easy for me. I've spent a decade hating and fearing the man. Old habits just die hard, I suppose," she said softly before standing and walking over to

him. Gently placing her hand on his bare arm, she turned him to face her. "I also know what he's capable of and I'd never do anything that would cause him to hurt you. Now, tell me about this party so that I won't disappoint you," she added, effectively changing the subject.

They sat on the sofa, both still gloriously nude, and discussed the upcoming party.

"Very few slaves that come to these parties make it out unscathed. I have already made it known that you are mine and I do not wish to share you, but that may be taken out of my control. It would appear that the Dark Lord took a sudden interest in you tonight. He, himself may wish to take you from me."

Hermione gasped in shock. Lucius was the only thing, as sadistic as it was, that was keeping her safe and even sane. What if she was taken away by another? What if that person wished to only harm her? What if the Dark Lord himself made her into his personal slave and she never saw Lucius again, or he broke her the way he did Ginny?

"Only he would have that authority, Hermione," he said softly, sensing her tension. "No other Death Eater could take you as you were given to me by the Dark Lord himself for my loyal service. It would not be in his best interest to reward such services and then take away said rewards. I will give you the option now, however, to decide if you would be willing to 'play' with anyone else. You must tell me your desires before tomorrow so that I will know. I can make it look as though it was my own wish to share you and no one would think they could do as they wanted with you. I always keep what is mine, Hermione, never forget that you belong to me."

"Do I have to?" she asked shakily.

"No, but I'm afraid in time the decision may be taken out of your hands. It will be better if I were able to control the situation."

"But I thought you said that I was given to you and couldn't be taken away."

“They wouldn’t take you away. There’s a difference in owning a slave and having sex with one,” he said haughtily.

“Oh,” she muttered.

“Tomorrow night you will be expected to look your best. I will provide a dress for the occasion and I expect excellence from you, is that understood?”

“Yes,” she said, looking up at him nervously.

“Just like earlier, you are not to look at the Dark Lord, or speak to him unless he speaks to you directly. I also want you to treat the others the same way, as a single glance can send the wrong impression. This is a victory party for our success in last week’s battle and there will be more than a little alcohol. Also, Severus will be the ‘guest of honor’ so to speak and will be rewarded in some small way.”

“A battle? Can you tell me...?”

“No, I can’t tell you much. No one on your side,” he spat in disgust, “that you’re familiar with was killed, only a few newer members. Potter didn’t even show. We believe the Dark Lord’s plan to slowly kill him from heartbreak is actually working.”

“What do you mean?” she asked, worry and concern for her best friend lacing her voice.

“Every time he takes the Weasley girl, Potter can see it. This is what the Dark Lord has told us, though none understand it. The Dark Lord is not a nice lover, Hermione, and if he wants you, I’m sure Potter will see that as well. You’ll be in pain, but you **MUST** obey him. Don’t challenge him or you may not live to regret it. You’ve not seen the condition of the other slaves and you won’t see it until tomorrow, but you look like a queen in comparison. I’m not sure what it is about you, but taking care of you has actually been to my advantage. You’ve turned out far better than even I expected.”

“I did agree to the terms, Lucius, although I never expected you to keep your end of our agreement,” she said absentmindedly. “Poor

Harry. That would be enough to kill him.” She stood up and started pacing the room, her mind working in overdrive as she muttered to herself. “If he really has opened the connection again, then Harry will see everything. He won’t have a choice and he won’t be able to block it. This will surely kill him.”

“Hermione, what are you mumbling about?” Lucius asked exasperatedly. Although he was growing to care somewhat for the mudblood, and definitely enjoyed the sex, she was still his slave and sometimes he just wanted to physically shut her up. Right now, however, she seemed to know something that no other Death Eater knew about, save Severus, and he wasn’t talking.

“Oh, um,” she stammered, not trusting Lucius enough yet to tell him what she knew, “I’m just worried about Harry, that’s all.”

“What connection are you talking about?” he asked forcefully, taking her upper arms in his hands and pulling her to face him, “and DO NOT lie to me.”

She gave a resigned sigh before saying, “they’re connected. Vol...the Dark Lord and Harry have a connection. There are times when Harry can see exactly what the Dark Lord can see. That’s how he knew to go to the Department of Mysteries the night Sirius was killed. I thought you knew that.”

“No, not completely. We’re obviously only told a limited amount. Had I known more, I wouldn’t have failed that day as I did.”

“What did you think it was?”

“An implanted dream of sorts, I suppose. This whole conversation is getting off point. As for tomorrow, you must know you have many enemies that will be there and you will have to watch yourself. Stay with me and allow me to take care of you.”

“Ok,” she said quietly.

“And before you ask, Bella and my wife will be present.”

Hermione's eyes flashed with rage, but she didn't say anything.

Lucius quirked an eyebrow at her. "Problems with my wife?"

"No," she ground out.

"Ah, I see. Still holding a grudge against Bella for killing Black, then?"

She ripped herself from his grip and stormed closer to the bed. "You could say that," she snarled.

"You must realize that Black was very unhinged from his time in Azkaban. Death was probably better for him than staying imprisoned in his own home."

"I'm well aware of the problems he suffered, thank you very much. But she took him away from Harry, from Remus."

"The werewolf?" he scoffed. "Come now, Hermione, you can't be seriously concerned for a werewolf."

"When that werewolf is Remus Lupin, then yes, I can. He's more of a man than most of your Death Eaters, no matter what you say!"

Lucius grabbed her arms tightly again and snarled angrily, "did you care for this werewolf, Granger? Is that your problem? You've been here, fucking me, and all the while pining away for him?"

Shaking her head in shock, she could only stare as he continued to squeeze her arms with bruising strength. "Lucius, you're hurting me, let go. I never had anything with Remus, for crying out loud, he was just a friend!"

Suddenly he threw her on the bed and dropped on top of her, roughly kissing her lips as his hands groped her breasts and down to her hips. He spread her legs by drawing on knee up to his waist, and quickly shoved his hardened length inside of her, making her scream in pain since she was no longer ready for him.

“You belong to me, now! To me” he snarled, thrusting roughly inside of her and ignoring the tears that streamed down her face. “I want to hear you say it! Tell me who you belong to!”

“Y...you, I...I belong to you,” she said, crying openly as he spilled his seed inside of her, causing her to burn from the inside out as his semen coated her abraded and bleeding flesh.

When he finished and stood back up, she quickly scooted to the headboard and drew her knees up to her chin.

“There’s a meeting in an hour that I must attend. I’ll be back afterward and we can continue our fun. Read more from those books,” he said evenly, before his clothes flew back to his body and he briskly left the room.

She sat in shock for several moments. She had never been afraid of Lucius as he’d never been so cruel to her as he was at that moment. Knowing she had no right to feel betrayed since she was in fact, his slave and he could do what he wanted with her, she hardened her heart and decided to do as he said, but to never read more into his words and actions than was truly there. She may have been coming to care for him, but that was over now and those feelings had no chance of being returned.

Still very shaken from the way he had roughly taken her, she walked over to the table and began arranging some of the Dark Arts books that Lucius had brought her. Hesitantly she pulled one close to her. She wasn’t sure what it was, but every time she read these books, she felt something within herself harden and an entirely different kind of magic spread throughout her body. Having no choice in the matter, and laughing slightly at the content of the chapter she knew was next, she opened the book and continued reading on the ways of Werewolf mating habits.

There was certainly an interesting bit about their aggressive coupling the day of the full moon and Hermione silently wondered if that was why Remus had kept himself locked away on those days. Apparently, sex wasn’t the only thing where they tended to become more aggressive. The texts went on to say that their behavior towards

others would become crude and almost violent. She was shocked to read further down the page that it was for this reason that werewolves could be used for dangerous causes. Not only because they were willing to shirk those that oppressed them, but because they felt the need to control and even punish other humans on that day. The ones that openly accepted what they were could be forced to use that aggression any day of the month. The ones that refused, would never have the 'gift' of peace on those days.

"I'll be damned," Hermione thought to herself when she finished the chapter, now understanding more of the werewolves ways than she ever thought possible. Suddenly the repercussions of everyone's treatment of Remus, including her own and the way he treated himself, made perfect sense to her.

The next book she pulled over, to her relief, was about healing. She read several spells that could be used to heal rape victims, which is what she herself was feeling like at the moment.

"Now, if only I could wave my wand at myself and say 'Vigoratus', then I'd be fine," she murmured, using her hand as a pretend wand.

A light suddenly shot out of her hand and into her body. Feeling a sudden tingling sensation, Hermione gasped and froze. Her entire body warmed and then all the pain was gone.

"Holy shit!" she exclaimed. "Was that wandless magic, or just..." she trailed off, still lost in thought.

Deciding to try a simple spell to see if her first assumption was correct, she aimed her hand at her robe and said "Accio robe." Her robe came flying across the room and landed on top of her.

"Well, that needs some word doesn't it?" she thought, jumping up and wrapping the robe around her as she smiled broadly at all the new possibilities now open to her.

As Lucius slowly strode down the hallway to his meeting, he was unsure which of the emotions battling within him would win, but knew he had to get them under control and fast. Never had he been as cruel to his slave as he had just been, but never had she provoked such feelings in him either, feelings of the like that he refused to think about. Reminding himself that he was a Malfoy and Malfoys never became jealous or upset due to their women, he locked his emotions firmly away from mind-prying eyes and turned to face the door. Taking a deep breath, he pushed the door open and walked briskly to the table to take his seat between Severus and Draco.

"Welcome, Lucius," Severus quipped. "I was beginning to think one of us would have to rescue you from your witch."

Lucius gave an involuntary flinch and tried to cover it quickly before replying. Draco however, beat him to it by choking on his fire whiskey.

"Honestly, Severus, do you think my father enjoys being with that Mudblood? Do you think he would lower himself to such standards? I would think he much preferred beating her within an inch of her life each day and watching as she shriveled into nothing as he raped her. I can't wait to see what's become of her tomorrow."

"And do you think, Draco, that I need you to speak for me?" Lucius growled, finally breaking into the conversation and trying desperately not to throttle his own son.

"No, Father. I was merely stating the facts," the youngest Malfoy replied, looking somewhat abashed.

"The facts as you believe them to be, son, and nothing more. Perhaps you should consider controlling your tongue on matters that are of no consequence to yourself."

"Yes, Father," Draco murmured making Severus and Lucius share a smirk at his expense.

Severus leaned closer to Lucius and asked softly, "trouble with Miss Granger?"



“No, nothing like that.”

“Ah, I see,” Severus commented before they both turned their attention to the door way that opened to admit their master.

Lucius bowed his head and gave the customary greeting before turning his thoughts inward for a moment as the seat next to Severus was taken by Voldemort. Surely Severus would have no idea what he was thinking. How could he possibly see anything about the situation that just occurred. It suddenly became clear and he realized that he just needed to go home to his wife for a nice, quick...loveless, passionless, uninteresting...ah hell, who was he kidding? As soon as the damn meeting was over, he'd go back upstairs and talk to Hermione. Not apologize to her of course, she was his slave after all, but discuss the situation and remind her to behave herself tomorrow. He also needed to get an idea of who she'd be willing to 'service' should the need arise, and arise he was sure it would once they all saw her.

The meeting continued to draw on with nothing of importance being said or even thought about. He could tell his old friend felt the same by the way he was picking at his fingernails and rolling his eyes at the younger Death Eaters' enthusiastic comments. Just as the meeting was drawing to a close and Lucius and Severus were ready to flee the boredom of the room, Voldemort decided to talk about their upcoming party.

“I have left everything up to Bella and Narcissa,” he said, nodding his head towards Lucius slightly, “and I'm sure that tomorrow's events will be fun for all of you.”

Everyone in attendance knew that 'fun for all' meant there would have to be many acts of cruelty involved for the Dark Lord to consider this event fun. Certainly unknown muggles would be brought in to 'entertain' them, at the expense only of said muggles. Lucius was certain there would be a bit of slave bartering as well, since more and more captives were being given to the Death Eaters.

“Does that mean you won't be attending, My Lord?” Yaxley asked from his position across the table.

“No, Yaxley, I believe I will be there, at least for a while. There’s something that has caught my attention recently and I wish to see it in action,” he responded and only a small movement of his eyes towards Lucius allowed the blond man to see that Hermione was what had caught his attention. The only question left was what ‘action’ he wished to see her in.

Hermione had been busily working on every spell she could ever remember trying in her entire life. Simple spells at first to those more complicated ones that were rarely used. When she completely mastered wandless summoning and banishing charms, she moved on to disarming spells and such. Those were a bit harder owing to the fact she didn’t have an opponent to actually disarm, but she assumed the practice could only pay off in a real situation.

After mastering all the spells she could think of, she began working her way through the spells she had encountered in her new books. Again, the feeling of something foreign flowed through her body, but the more she practiced, the more she embraced this new darkness, this new power, and the less she cared about how Lucius had hurt her or how much she missed her own friends and family. Suddenly, the world seemed a little too brittle for her liking and she vowed to take care of that. She would work her way through things slowly, stretching her mind out to others and discovering their weaknesses, before she planned her actual attack. If things went her way, and honestly what other way would she let things go, she’d have things moving in her direction. Things would be set to the way she wanted them and hypocrisy be damned, the world owed her something.

Several hours later, her door opened and in walked her very own Master. She inwardly scoffed at that idea, but knew that she liked her time with Lucius enough not to end things yet, and not to end them at all until she could be assured of his safety. She wasn’t yet to that level in her magic, dark or otherwise, so she decided to continue the charade and bowed her head slightly to him.

“Hermione,” he stated simply as he hung his pristine cloak on the rack and turned to join her at the table.

Lucius regarded her closely, but she gave away no emotions as to how she was feeling at the moment. This only aggravated his guilty conscious further, the one he refused to listen to, so he gruffly asked, "how are you?"

"Fine," she replied firmly, then pulled another book close to her and started to ignore him. When she flipped to the last page, she quietly gasped in shock and understanding, before closing the book and looking back to him. "Is there something you wanted?" she asked innocently.

"Um, yes, there was actually," he replied, an uncharacteristic stammer to his usually silky smooth voice before it hardened and he continued, "The party is still planned for tomorrow and I need to know your thoughts on the previously discussed subject."

"No," she responded evenly, "you need to know who I'd be willing to fuck. I must say that it is rather nice of you to extend such curtsies to me, since I'm nothing more than your slave, and I'd be happy to tell you my wishes."

"Hermione, you're..." he broke off suddenly and ran his fingers down his already drawn face, unsure how he almost let something of that nature slip. He decided instead to cover it by continuing with the other part of the conversation and ignoring her remark. "You're going to be watched by the Dark Lord himself tomorrow night. Any sign of weakness on my part will be quickly punished and you must realize that. Tell me now who is on your list and I will see what I can do."

"Fine," she sighed, looking closely at his handsome face and relishing briefly the words he almost said, but not allowing him to know that he was almost exactly where she wanted him to be.

Continuing with her plan, she slowly stood up and walked over to him. He looked at her questioningly and she allowed her gaze to soften when she looked in his eyes. She gently cupped his head and brought it to nestle on her stomach, clad only in her black silk robe. Then something she didn't expect to happen happened. Something that, if she went by the words written on the last page of her book, shouldn't have been able to happen. She felt a strong feeling of

tenderness to this man who was showing a rare moment of weakness in allowing himself to be cradled by her. She stroked his long blond hair through her fingers and sorted out her thoughts. Finally a conclusion was met...she would protect this man with her very life, just like she would all others that she cared about, no matter how much he pretended she didn't matter to him.

Lucius was shocked at first when she walked to him with a soft expression on her face. The hardness he knew he deserved wasn't even there and he felt himself become even guiltier for his earlier actions. Slowly he allowed her to lower his head to her body and he willingly wrapped his arms around her waist, drawing her even closer as she stroked his hair and he took her scent in deeply.

Gradually, without words, he brought her down to sit on his lap. He nuzzled her hair with his nose and she wrapped her arms around his neck, tilting her head to allow him better access. He pressed his lips to her neck and softly began kissing her, moving upwards to capture her lips with his own. Her traitorous body reacted of its own accord and she shifted closer to him, moaning into his mouth when he deepened the kiss. She felt herself being lifted into his arms and carried to the bed. All thoughts, of plans or otherwise, escaped her mind when he lay her down gently and sat beside her.

His fingers trailed around her face for a short time, before slowly lowering to her neck and then the sweet expanse of now uncovered flesh between her breasts. He continued on until he met the tie of her robe and lightly pulled it loose. He flattened his palm onto her stomach and tenderly moved the robe away from her body as his hands left a blazing trail behind.

Hermione felt the tenderness radiating from his hands and knew that this was his form of apology. The proud, aristocratic man would never actually say the words, but he would show her with his tenderness how sorry he was. She found herself forgiving him over and over as his hands moved up to cup her breasts and he lowered his head to her nipple. Moaning and arching into his touch, she found herself responding to his tongue in ways she was sure she hadn't before. He felt like a part of her in this moment and all of her nerve endings

seemed intensified. If only he would touch her where she so desperately needed him to, then she felt she could die a happy death.

Her wish was soon granted when his mouth began working its way between her breasts and down her flat stomach. His hands cupped her hips and his fingers stroked her flaming skin as his tongue slipped over her already wet folds. Bucking wildly up into him, she started begging and pleading for more. The only answer he gave her was to hold her in place with one hand as he lowered another to slip into her tight sleeve of wetness.

“Lucius, please!” she begged as another finger joined the first one and she felt her completion nearing.

Smirking to himself, he flicked his tongue over her swollen nub and bent his fingers inside of her. It had been so long since he’d done this for anyone, even his wife--- especially his wife, he corrected---that he was surprised how much he enjoyed it. Enjoyed the smell and taste, but enjoyed even more her reaction to his ministrations. She was so responsive to his touch that he wanted nothing more than to prolong her pleasure before giving her the release she was begging for. His name on her lips was like an angel’s song and he felt that, in that moment, perhaps there was redemption even for him. He flicked his tongue over her once more and she bucked violently beneath him before her juices flowed from her body and onto his tongue. Lapping greedily, he licked her dry as she came back down, then he slowly climbed back up her body, licking and kissing the entire way until his mouth met hers.

The taste of her release on his lips made her own stomach flutter. Her body was calm and relaxed after her orgasm and she languidly wrapped her arms around her lover’s neck. That’s what he was to her at this moment, he wasn’t her master or a Death Eater, only her lover, and her heart warmed with the knowledge.

“I must go now, love,” he said quietly and she was sure he didn’t realize what he had called her, “but before I do, I need your list.”

She grinned up at him and stroked his cheek before replying. “You, Lucius, are the only man I want. However, if the need arises that I

must do something for others, there are none that I trust and few that I would be truly willing to touch. I'm not sure what to do, to be honest with you."

He lay down beside her, still fully clothed, and pulled her close to him, trying to hide his smile as the words she'd just uttered washed over him. Her arm curled around his waist when she settled her head on his chest, and she draped her own leg over both of his, holding him like he belonged to her and not the other way around. Grabbing swiftly onto his train of thought, he steered it back onto a relative track.

"Well, there's not much I can do to help you. I trust Severus with my very life, but I don't honestly want you anywhere near Draco." He ignored the shudder that went through her body at the thought of his son touching her and continued with his thoughts. "There are just so few worthy of your pleasure, my dear, that it's very hard to decide, isn't it? Dolohov might be fairly gentle..."

"Absolutely not!" she said forcefully. "He's the one that almost killed me in the Department of Mysteries, remember?"

"No, I had actually forgotten that. Mulciber, Grabbe, and Goyle won't get anywhere near you and neither will the werewolf trash. Both of the Lestranges are out as I prefer you to be whole when I get you back."

"I prefer that as well," she said cheekily before propping herself up to look into his kind face. "I think I could handle Professor Snape, although I'm sure that the awkwardness would interfere at first. Otherwise I will respect your own decisions about what you wish for me to do. It will be up to you who I'm to be with. Just please keep in mind that I'm a person with actual feelings and don't wish to be brutally injured. I do still have some shred of dignity left."

He gently pushed a curl back behind her ear and said earnestly, "Hermione, I'll never let anyone hurt you. I promised to protect you and that's exactly what I'm going to do. If you trust me, then I'll make the best decisions for you that I can."

She lowered her head to kiss him, but when she deepened the kiss, he broke it off and rose from the bed. "I must go now," he said quickly. "Your dress will be delivered tomorrow and you need to be ready promptly at six. I'll collect you then since I'll have to take down several of the wards on your door." He stroked her cheek gently, then walked over to retrieve his cane and cloak and left the room.

Hermione lay in bed for several moments before summoning the blankets up around her. Tomorrow would no doubt be the most degrading and humiliating, not to mention publicly so, day of her life and she was dreading it with all she had in her. No amount of magic could take that away, even though she racked her brain for some kind of solution. Tomorrow she would simply have to summon her Gryffindor courage and do what was asked of her, with whomever it was asked. She reminded herself that nothing at all may come of anything, and drifted off into an uneasy sleep with that thought in mind.

-1The morning sun streaked through the room, making Hermione sigh wearily and hold her eyes shut tightly. She thought about rolling over and covering her head, then decided that she still had work to do with her newest books and slowly climbed out of bed.

A sudden thought struck her and she glared at the window. If the window was charmed to only show the occupant's moods, then why the hell was it so damn sunny?

"Good morning," he drawled, his silky voice sending shivers of delight throughout her waking body.

"Are you responsible for the sunlight?" she asked grumpily, walking towards the bathroom to freshen up.

"Yes, actually, I am," he called after her. "You see, I redid the windows whilst I waited on Sleeping Beauty to arise. It now actively reflects the weather of the outside world. I thought that would make it easier on you to determine times, since you're not allowed a timepiece."

"Sleeping Beauty was awakened by a kiss, just for future reference," she replied, walking back over to him. "And Heaven forbid I know what time it is, I might actually learn one day from the next."

She was very surprised to hear his sudden chuckle at her jibe towards his Master's insane thoughts. He covered it quickly however, and looked a bit out of sorts for just a moment.

"I brought your dress for the party tonight. It's currently after twelve in the afternoon and you will need to be ready promptly at six."

"Yes, I was wondering how I would manage that feat, not knowing what time it was and when to start readying myself. Thank you, I'll be ready."

He nodded in answer before walking over to the chair and gathering the bag. Carefully picking it up, he handed it to her and waited for her reaction--she didn't disappoint him. Her face held a look of trepidation



as she unzipped the bag and pulled away the wrappings. The gasp she emitted was audible and her smile was brilliant when she looked at him.

Almost knocking him backwards, she flew into his arms and peppered his face with kisses. "Thank you, Lucius! Thank you so much!"

"You're quite welcome," he replied, holding her tightly for a moment before breaking away from her. "You looked worried. Tell me, what were you expecting?"

"I'm not entirely sure," she answered, a look of complete honesty in her eyes. "I know our um, relationship has evolved to somewhat more than was ever expected, but this is just an amazing gift, Lucius. I suppose I expected to actually look like the whore-slave everyone thinks I am. I just didn't expect something so nice. No one has given me anything so nice before."

Lucius had to look away from her face, away from the emotions he saw playing in her eyes that he was afraid she'd be able to read in his own. Instead he studied the simple dress. He had picked this one out himself, not trusting anyone else to do so, and was quite pleased with what he had found. The straps of the dress were tasteful, even if the low cutting did allow quite a bit of cleavage to show, and the length should hit her around the ankles. He knew she'd be a vision for the Dark Lord to behold, the one he commanded to see, and silently wished that he could actually make her ugly for the night.

"I want you to have nice things, Hermione. I bring you books and such to keep your sharp mind occupied, but I want you to have comforts as well. If there is anything you need, all you have to do is ask."

She stared wistfully out of the window, Lucius temporarily forgotten as she gazed at the bright sky and wished she could go home. Things would be nothing like before, but she hated being trapped. She supposed that what she truly wished for was something that she would never get, and therefore there was no reason to wish in the first place.

"I'm very happy with what I have, Lucius. Will you be with your wife tonight?"

He looked at her in shock for a moment before he could come up with a response. It was obvious there was something more she desired, and he could only assume it was her freedom--freedom he was very unwilling, not to mention unable, to give her. He was also very curious as to why she was asking about Narcissa.

"No, most of the night she will spend with Bella going over every detail of the party. That is their task for the night, mostly Bella's punishment for angering the Dark Lord. I will only leave you for short periods of time, but I will always have my eyes on you," he added in warning, afraid she was planning something.

She let out a deep sigh of relief and smiled up at him. "Good. I was worried I'd be deserted all evening and have to fend for myself. Of course, with you being there, I'll have to act properly enslaved won't I?"

He smirked at her. So it wasn't escape she wanted, but protection. That was surely a good sign. Unfortunately, the one she needed protecting from the most was the one he couldn't stop. "Yes," he answered finally, "you will have to do as you're told. I will spare you in any way I can, but you must understand that these people are not of the nicest nature. They're not called Death Eaters as a joke and would surely kick you while you're down and spit in your face if given a chance."

Grimacing at those words, Hermione slowly made her way back over to the dress and ran her fingers over the velvety material.

"I must take my leave. I will be back shortly to collect you. Perhaps you should read some more while I'm away," he murmured, wrapping his arm around her waist and bringing her flush with his body before filling her senses with a searing kiss. "Impress me," he said quietly before turning and walking out of the room.

For several hours after Lucius had left, Hermione waited around nervously. She had read more of her books and practiced more spells,

but the ones she had yet to do were the ones she needed someone around to help her with. Most of her time, she spent lost in thought. The moment she had opened a few of the books, she felt the now familiar feeling of a foreign power running through her veins. Only now that she understood the powers, could she engulf them like a starving child.

When she assumed the time to be close, she showered and began getting ready for the night ahead. Knowing that a horrible time was awaiting her, but that Lucius had asked her to impress him, she immaturity decided to go about the night as if it were a date. She began doing her hair and makeup. Using a light touch of color, but darkening her eyes to a very smoky hue, she achieved the look of an aristocrat and marveled at Lucius' knowledge of 'key make-up ingredients'. Her hair was artistically done. Pulled up away from her face, but freely flowing in golden-brown curls down her back, it added to the allure of her unpronounced beauty.

Slowly exiting the bathroom, she walked nervously over to her dress. She was still in awe and caressed the dress like she would a fragile lover, before taking it out and slipping it on. 'Perfect fit,' she mused, once again astounded at Lucius' abilities where females were concerned. The green velvet hugged her curves and raised her breasts, showing every inch of her body in a very tasteful way. The straps wrapped around her shoulders and left her back completely bare, dangerously low. She supposed she should be thankful for the length at least, since the dress flowed down from her hips and grazed the floor. Then she noticed that the slit on the side went all the way up to her hip, showing her long, toned leg with every step. 'Tastefully slutty,' she mused.

Sighing heavily and wishing once again that this were a date, she slowly began placing the silver shoes on her slender feet. 'Green and silver,' she thought in disgust before going to look at herself in the mirror.

"Good enough," she said out loud, walking back into the room to find Lucius staring wide-eyed at her.

He quickly guarded his expression and let his eyes travel the entire length of her body and back up again.

"Does this meet with your approval, Lord Malfoy?" she asked demurely.

"More than," he answered, swiftly walking over and taking her hand. Bowing over her offered hand, he gently brushed his lips across her knuckles before tucking it into his arm.

"And now we party," he said quietly and she was almost positive there was an air of dread in those words.

"And now we party," she agreed heavily, allowing the situation to wash over her completely for the first time this evening.

"We will be arriving early as I do not wish to make a scene with you entering. Be cautious, pet, you will not like what you see tonight, but you must not allow it to show. Keep stoic and in command of yourself or we will both pay the price. Do you understand me, Hermione? No matter what you see tonight, you must not show your emotions."

"I understand. As much as I dread this, I will remember myself," she said timidly, then added, "for you."

He gave her a brief, encouraging smile, then walked to a set of double doors. The entire way down the steps and to this room, Hermione couldn't help but notice the normalcy of the manor. Had she walked in of her own accord, she never would have expected Dark Wizards to live here. Then again, that was part of the reasoning she was sure. The dim-witted Ministry never did look further than the end of its' own nose.

Lucius opened the door quietly and they stepped inside. As he walked her over to a far corner, he quietly murmured, "Severus has agreed to keep an eye on you at the times when I am unavailable. I hope that is ok with you."

"Perfectly," she replied gratefully. "Although I'm sure he would rather kill me with his own bare hands."

He gave her another brief smile and showed her to her seat, on the floor. In a cold, commanding voice, he said, "you will sit here at my feet, slave, and do as your told."

She immediately knew the 'show' had started and answered quietly, "yes, Master," as she took her seat at his feet. The room was fairly empty and he had her sequestered in a far corner, so she chanced adding in a very low voice and to no one in particular, "I thought about changing my dress to other more suitable colors."

He snorted, but didn't respond, knowing exactly what colors she had in mind and laughing inwardly at her cheek.

Hermione sat back on her self-made comfortable padding and watched as others entered the room. She recognized several of the Death Eaters and was grateful that none had seemed to notice her. She gasped audibly when she saw several other girls being roughly pushed to the floor. These were obviously the slaves Lucius had told her about and her insides churned with guilt and sincere thanks at the way Lucius treated her. He was right, next to them she did indeed look like a queen.

Studying their beaten and bruised faces, she tried to recognize any of the malnourished girls. Some she thought might be the ones that were taken at the same time as Ginny and herself, but others had obviously been there for a long time. They were all wearing the kind of dress that she had feared she would be in. They looked like a pirate's wench and their Death Eaters looked all too ready to share them around. She jumped when she felt Lucius' breath on her neck.

"Cast your eyes downward," he said and she quickly obeyed. "Remember to keep emotionless," he continued as if he were giving her harsh commands, "you will not become one of them, Hermione, but you cannot save them now either. The true party will begin when Severus and the Dark Lord come in, but the problems, I fear, will come when you are noticed. Be prepared and remember to keep your eyes down."

“Yes, Master,” she responded, looking to the world like a thoroughly chastised slave, although very few had noticed her yet.

In the next half hour, she found herself wishing that she were invisible. Many Death Eaters had found Lucius and walked over to speak to him about one thing or another, while commenting on their wishes to borrow his slave. Hermione was amazed at how openly they talked of missions and such with her there, but assumed that they believed she would die in the house so it really wouldn't matter what she knew. She felt the cold, hard powers become stronger within herself and welcomed them happily. She would use this to her advantage, gathering any and all knowledge and storing it away for later.

Suddenly the doors burst open and Lord Voldemort strode in with Severus Snape only a footstep behind. They walked to the front of the room and sat down as everyone stopped and bowed while Voldemort relished the dead silence that met their presence. He took the highest chair, like a king to a throne, and Severus sat immediately to his right. Hermione's head was lowered, but she glared at them both in her mind. She may physically desire the experience she was sure to have with Voldemort, but she still hated the man. Snape, on the other hand, she had yet to figure out. She was sure there was so much more to Harry's story than even he knew, but she had yet to find out what it was. Schooling her thoughts, she turned her attention to the head 'throne' and listened to the words being spoken.

“Severus Snape,” he said in his low, calm voice that seemed to wash over her body and leave her tingling, “has served me well these many years. Very soon he will resume his role as a spy and infiltrate the Order of the Phoenix. Our objective will be two-fold; destroy the Order and destroy Harry Potter. Tonight, however, we celebrate! Due to his unceasing loyalty, tonight we will honor Severus. His reward, however, is one I will see to towards the end of the night.”

With a flick of his wand the tables were laden with food and drink. There was a brief second when she could have sworn she heard Severus say 'fucked up Bastard,' but when she dared a look at him, his features were blank. Lucius quietly talked with a few others around his table and smiled genuinely when Severus came over to join him. Hermione heard his gasp and could only assume he had just

noticed her, but nothing was said as they began to congratulate him and talk of other things. She gathered from the conversation around her that the planned entertainment for the night would be muggle torture. She had to keep reminding herself not to care, to embrace the hardness she had felt earlier and stay detached. The smell of food was wafting around and making her stomach growl lightly, but she knew better than to assume the slaves would be fed. Unlike the others however, she was sure Lucius would take care of her needs when they left. He had given her a late lunch and now she understood why. Once again, she reminded herself of the other day when he so forcefully had taken her, and refused to acknowledge that the late lunch was anything more than just him feeding her. Even if she had forgiven, she had not forgotten.

Severus had walked to a different table not long after and only wished he could slip away unnoticed. The only thing he hated more than being with a bunch of drunks was being the center of attention around said drunks. Impatiently he took a seat away from most of the others and sat brooding. Without warning a cold voice hissed to his left, making him spin around and bow his head.

“Now, now, Severus, what are you doing hiding in the corner? This is your party, is it not? Do you not find everything to your liking?”

“Yes, Master, of course I do. I just needed a breather for a moment.”

“It would appear,” he said slowly, following Severus’ previous gaze, “that you were staring at Lucius’ mudblood slave. Do you desire her Severus? She would probably make for a very suitable fuck.”

“Possibly, My Lord, but as her past professor I find it hard to see her that way,” he replied honestly.

“Perhaps we should change that,” he said, standing and walking away to speak to his other servants.

Lucius watched warily as Bella and his wife walked towards his table.

“Bella, Cissy,” he said regally as he stood to greet them. “What do I owe the pleasure?”

"Pleasure, dear husband?" Narcissa spat and Hermione had the distinct impression she was being stared at. "I think we can all agree that the niceties need not be observed between us, Lucius."

"Ah, I think you're right, dear wife. However, these are only manners. One can't be married to you as long as I have and not learn to bite his tongue and mind his manners, now can he?"

Narcissa huffed, making Hermione wonder why that comment had her rankled. She was surprised to find herself relieved that their marriage wasn't a happy one, but concerned that she even cared. Those thoughts were quickly replaced with ones of rage when Bella joined the conversation.

"Cissy, you know Lucius is trying to get you riled tonight. Just ignore him. Besides, even a mutt can show respect, just look at my dear cousin. Before I killed him, I made sure he respected me."

Hermione felt the rage surge within her, but tamped it down, not allowing any emotion to show on her face as Bella continued to taunt her.

"From what I hear, his little wolf friend will be next. I believe I'd like to personally take out the red-headed blood traitors myself. Maybe our Master will let us make a day of it!" she cackled gleefully.

Suddenly, without warning, she tripped and fell completely on her ass, legs sprawled and eyes blazing as she looked for her attacker. The only thing she saw however, was Lucius' hand offering to help her up, and his face breaking into an enormous smile before he openly laughed at her. Several of the surrounding Death Eaters joined in and only one had seen Hermione flick her fingers right before the accident, but assured himself that he was seeing things and went back to brooding in his corner.



-1Inwardly, Hermione was laughing hysterically, with big tears streaming down her cheeks as she clutched her sides and bent over in laughter. Outwardly, no one could even tell she had witnessed a thing as her body nor face gave away any indications. "Stupid bitch! That's only a taste of what will come to her. This could be fun, making her look the fool tonight," Hermione thought darkly, still quaking with laughter from within.

Bella stood up and glared at the room, silencing most of the newer ones, but having no effect whatsoever on the seasoned Death Eaters as they hooted openly at her expense.

"Enough!" shouted Voldemort, effectively silencing the entire room. His face twisted into an amused smirk as he flicked his wand at the door and added, "the fun has just arrived."

The doors creaked open slowly and three cloaked and masked figures entered the room, levitating a muggle family behind them. The tension and excitement was palpable in the room, as if one could wrap themselves in it like a blanket. Hermione, taking advantage of everyone else's distraction, also chanced a glance at the family and tensed visibly. The man and woman were levitated, unconscious, a foot above the ground as they were guided to the center of the room. Behind them followed a younger man of about seventeen and a girl, possibly a year older.

When all four were at the center, they were dropped unceremoniously into a heap on the floor. Voldemort flourished his wand for effect before pointing it at the family and saying 'Ennervate' loudly. Hermione watched their faces as they awakened, taking in their surroundings and cowering in fear. She felt something brush her hip and noticed Lucius' foot and calf were resting against her. There was no need to look at him, she knew he was offering her silent words of comfort and warning. Letting the darkness wash over her, she detached herself emotionally from the scene and listened to the Dark Lord's speech.

"Muggles, you have been captured by my servants and brought here tonight for their entertainment. This is a great honor that is not rarely bestowed on your kind. I see you are frightened," he said amusedly,

“and you should be, as it is doubtful you will make it out of here tonight.”

There was a bit of a commotion as the older man stumbled to his feet and swayed precariously. “Do not touch my family,” he growled in the face of Voldemort, who looked at him with disgust.

“Touching sentiments,” he snarled, “that one would defend one’s family is truly honorable. However, you will be of no use to them dead. Avada Kedavra”

Hermione was sure the intent was to torture the man first, but knew that Voldemort’s anger was directed at his own father. Therefore, by killing this man, he tried to kill his own father once more, the father that never stood up for him.

“As for you,” he continued, surveying the other three as he walked over to the young girl who had screamed when her father dropped. She started whimpering and her brother drew her behind himself. “Crucio,” he hissed, making the man drop to the ground and scream in pain. His screams tore through the room and many snickers joined in, making a melodious sound of insanity.

He banished the young man across the room, where he fell with a heap and didn’t move again. “As for you,” he repeated, stroking his wand along the young girl’s cheek, “you will come in very handy. Severus,” he called.

“Yes, My Lord,” Severus answered, standing from his seat and striding closer.

“The choice is yours, Severus. Would you like to play with this one, or do you prefer to watch?”

“Bloody fucking hell,” he said and Hermione jerked her head up to him, only to see a completely impassive face that held no sign of having said anything. She lowered her gaze again, and this time heard his response a little louder.

“Thank you, My Lord. I choose to watch first, Master. But I would like the pleasure of killing them myself.”

“I knew you would. You do enjoy inflicting death, do you not, Severus?” he asked with pride.

“Yes, My Lord,” he answered, then added, “if it saves them from you and your ridiculous ideas of fun.”

Again Hermione whipped her head up to stare at him in shock, certain he would be tortured for his words. However, Voldemort had turned away towards another Death Eater. “What the hell is going on?” she wondered to herself, “and why am I hearing him say things like that? Things I know he hasn’t and wouldn’t say?” She watched the events with a lowered head, wishing she could remove herself from the room, or better yet, kill most of the occupants herself. A cold, hard death is what they all deserved, and she amazed herself by wanting to be the one to cause such a thing.

Silently thanking her new darkness, she watched and listened as, one after another, the Death Eaters walked up to the two women. They would take their turns either cursing the women, or physically injuring them. One man, but she was unsure which and could only see a small scar running along his cheek, beat the young girl so severely that she crumpled into a heap in the middle of the floor. Her mother was screaming for them to leave her alone, only to have another man vanish her own clothes and brutally begin raping her, making her scream even louder. A strangled cry from across the room caught the attention of several and they advanced on the younger man, dragging him to the center of the room to rejoin his mother and sister.

“You sick fucks! Leave them alone!” he screamed, kicking and punching anyone he could get his hands and feet near.

They dropped him onto the floor and kicked him hard in the stomach, making his stomach lurch and his head fall forward. Then they began beating him in earnest, holding him up when he could no longer support himself only so they could kick and curse him more, and all the while treating his unconscious sister to the same brutal acts that they bestowed upon his mother.

It was all utterly barbaric and the screams emanating from the mother were tearing at Hermione's heart and soul. Her new powers and coldness were not completely effective and just as she thought she could take no more, she felt Lucius leg press harder into her hip. It was almost as if he understood her plight, but yet needed to remind her to stay where she was, unnoticed for now. She was impressed that he refused to join in the brutality, but noticed that Bella was more than willing to make up for anyone's absence. The woman actually got off on torture, it was complete madness.

As silent tears began to build in her eyes and she was sure her body was reacting, making a move all on its own to stand and fight them all, someone shouted, "That's enough!"

Releasing the breath she had been holding, she watched as the others stepped away and Severus walked toward them. The younger man had been levitated in the air and bounced around, but immediately came crashing down when Severus shouted. The mother's pitiful whimpers were heard as she gazed at her beaten and unconscious children through her bloody and swollen eyes.

"Avada Kedavra!" he said calmly, watching the woman drop in her final silence. The curse was repeated twice more and the entire muggle family was dead.

Lucius slowly pulled his leg away from her and assessed his friend. He knew Hermione had reached her limit and was silently thanking the gods that Severus had finally decided to join in and kill the family. The brutality was actually very disgusting for him, as he preferred the finer things in life which did not include such physically messy endeavors. He also knew his friend felt the same way and it was for that reason, not because he liked to kill, that he chose to end things instead of participating in them.

Severus stormed back to his seat beside Voldemort and the room waited for further instructions. They waited only moments before he eagerly began the rest of the evening.

“Removed the bodies and clear the mess,” he commanded. When that was complete, he turned to Lucius, who inwardly grimaced, and said, “Lucius, bring your mudblood slave here.”

Lucius swiftly grabbed her arm and gave the appearance of forcing her to follow him. Only the gently rubbing of his thumb on the underside of her arm let her know it was all an act. That simple gesture said more than words and instilled her with a sense of calm. He led her to the front of the room and gently shoved her to her knees, where she sat with her head lowered.

“I believe,” Voldemort began, making Hermione’s skin tingle once again, “that Severus is still in need of his reward. I have seen your slave in action and her services would make a suitable reward for his continued loyalty, don’t you agree, Lucius?”

“I do, My Lord,” he said ceremoniously.

Hermione couldn’t control the inward chuckle that was building inside of her. No one saw Severus’ eyes widen or heard his indrawn breath, but she knew he was not only dreading what was to come, but also slightly fearful of her actions towards him in an intimate situation.

“And you, Severus, do you feel my reward is acceptable?” Although posed as a question, the intent was clear--if he refused, he would be punished, if he accepted, he would have to trust his ex-student, the one he loathed and treated horribly while in his class.

His hesitation was answer enough and Voldemort looked at him sharply. “Is she not enough for you?” he hissed.

“N...no, My Lord. I just fear that the stupid chit might bite my cock off at the first chance. A payback of sorts, My Lord.”

Surprising most, Voldemort actually chuckled, a small smile gracing his snake-like features. “I see,” he replied quietly. “However, she does seem to rather enjoy her role as Lucius’ whore and I see no reason why she would not be happy to service you as well.”

Voldemort judged Severus' issues with his own thoughts and decided to be safe for once. He did not, after all, wish any harm to come to one of his most trusted servants. Pulling his wand, he pointed it at Hermione. "Imperio," he said softly, before commanding, "come here, slave."

She felt a wave of emptiness pass through her mind and felt a slight pleasure at having no thoughts and only the desire to please. That was quickly tamped down when the darkness within her drug her mind back to consciousness. A ghost of a smile passed across her features when she realized she couldn't be controlled in that way. Deciding to play along anyway, more for Lucius' sake than her own, she gracefully stood and walked closer to him, further embracing the darkness.

"Turn in a circle," he said and she obeyed, allowing the entire room to assess the condition of Lucius' slave and to gasp in surprise. They could see her toned back, completely bare to their eager eyes. When they greedily took in her curves, their gazes fell to her long legs, one of which was left bare from the slit, showing her thigh almost up to her hip. "Yes, Lucius has done well with his slave, has he not?" he asked no one in particular. "Now, Mudblood, turn to Severus and get on your knees before him. You will suck his cock to completion and make sure he enjoys himself."

Hermione did as she was told, finally able to look Severus fully in the face. When she noticed the look of trepidation grace his normally stoic features, she couldn't help the wickedness she felt. Grinning slightly as she walked between his legs, she gave him a sly wink and sunk to her knees before him. She could hear his quick intake of breath when he realized she wasn't under anyone's control but her own, but silently watched as she unbuttoned his robe and his trousers.

His tenseness filled her with a sense of control and she relished the feeling. In this moment, she could choose to forever injure the man who had tormented her for a great deal of her life, or she could play along and continue with her plan. She pulled his now hardening length from its' confines and stroked him gently.

He watched her intently the entire time, waiting for a movement that was not to his liking. When she began stroking his length with such gentleness, he felt his body start to relax and his brain numb slightly. Her tongue flicked out and she began licking him slowly, making him groan quietly as Lucius stood to the side watching. He felt himself harden completely under her ministrations and gave himself over to the inevitable; Hermione Granger was going to suck him off and he was going to let her. He would think about the consequences later, along with the many other things about her he was discovering. Hissing in pleasure, he brought his hand to the back of her head and began guiding her actions.

She had started slowly, gently licking his length from base to tip before swiping her tongue around the head and taking him into her wet mouth. It was a pleasant surprise to find that he was almost the exact same length and width as Lucius. Both men were rather large and that only served to excite her more. Sucking him gently into her mouth, she brought her hand up to cup his balls, loving the excited moans he was barely emitting. When she began bobbing her head up and down on his cock, using her hand to further his pleasure, he grasped her hair and guided her actions into quick, hard thrusts, until his balls tightened and his cock thrummed. Her own pleasure heightened, she began moaning around him, sending the vibrations throughout his body.

"Fuck!" he cursed, before forcing her head down twice more and releasing his seed into her willing mouth.

Sucking him completely dry, she dared a glance up into his face, not knowing how many liberties she could take with him, but thinking it was probably very few. She was shocked by the momentary look of peace on his face before he guarded his features and his eyes met hers. She drew a finger under her bottom lip and licked his remaining juices from it. Covertly winking again, she stood quietly and awaited further instructions.

She lowered her gaze, but not before she noticed Voldemort's eyes measuring her, assessing her as if she were his next meal. Moans and grunts could be heard around her and she suddenly realized that other acts of a sexual nature were taking place in the room.

"You may resume your seat, Mudblood," he ordered with a voice coated in desire.

As she turned to walk back to her seat, she saw the other slaves being forced to perform the same act on those that 'owned' them. Appalled by the complete force used, she walked disgustedly back to her spot and took her seat, sending a hopeful glance Lucius' way that he would later relieve the growing ache she was beginning to feel, she ached with need and desire and she longed to have him inside of her.

"That is enough for tonight," he said sternly, standing up and walking towards the door as those around him bowed.

Lucius took her arm and pulled her up. "We will wait for a moment on the others to leave," he said quietly, then tensed beside her.

"Lucius, I trust you will be coming home tonight? Surely you don't want her now that she's had his come dripping from her mouth," Narcissa spat while glaring at Hermione.

"Ah, Cissy, you do have such a way with words. Tell me, my wife, if I come home tonight, do you think you can do what she just did?"

Narcissa flinched and her hand flew to cover her mouth. "How dare you? How dare you even assume that I would do such a thing!" she screeched.

"Well then, you have your answer. I'm not sure when, or even if, I'll be coming home at all tonight. I trust you can find your own way there."

Hermione was ecstatic! He was coming up to their room tonight and would probably be staying the entire night. She had wanted that for the longest time, no matter that he was already a married man, she wanted to wake up, just once, curled into his arms. She was awakened from her intensely happy thoughts by the drawing voice of Draco Malfoy.



“Did you like that, Mudblood? Did you like sucking off the professor you have hated for so long?”

Unfortunately, she had to keep her eyes cast downward and not respond. However a gentle nudge from Lucius made her look up. “You may answer him freely, Hermione.”

She smirked wickedly as she looked into Draco’s eyes, his shock evident on his face. “Actually, yes, I did. He is a rather large man and I do have a fondness for that particular act. However, ferret, I doubt yours would even be worth finding, let alone touching.”

She watched as his anger grew, but was surprised when he actually struck her. Her head snapped back roughly and he glared at her evilly. “As if I would let such trash touch me!” he spat. “Come, Mother. Let us go home now and away from the filth.”

“Draco,” Lucius growled, grabbing his son’s arm painfully and pulling him closer, “if you EVER touch her again, in any way, I will see that you regret it until your dying day. Do you understand me?”

Again shock registered on the pale boy’s face. “She is only a slave, Father,” he finally managed to say.

“And you have been warned,” he said coldly. “Take your mother home and get out of my sight, both of you!”

They immediately did as they were told, not daring to disobey a direct order from the head patriarch and one of Voldemort’s highest ranking.

“Come now, pet,” he said gently, taking her arm and leading her out of the doorway and back to their room.

Once the door was closed and the wards in place, he turned her around to face him. His gaze was hard, but his hand was gentle as he caressed the red mark glowing on her perfect skin.

“I never thought he would strike you,” Lucius said in way of apology.

“It’s not a problem,” she said softly, “besides, he hits like a girl.”

Lucius chuckled and drew her closer to him, kissing her lips languidly before tasting the flesh around her neck. She moaned and tilted her head to allow him better access as her hands moved to his chest and she felt the heat radiating off of him.

"Tonight went better than I expected," he murmured. "You did well controlling yourself."

"I tried," she answered, "I can't believe they enjoy that." She kissed along his neck and slowly began unbuttoning his dress robes, allowing them to fall to the floor as she kissed his now bare chest. "However, I prefer to think of other things now that we're alone."

He nodded in agreement and easily slipped out of his dark green boxers, watching as she gazed greedily at his growing erection. "It would appear, my pet, that you are quite insatiable," he said smoothly as he drew her body up against his own.

Slowly he moved the straps of her dress down and watched her eyes glaze over with desire. He placed several nips and kisses along her neck and shoulder as she arched into him and moaned. His hands ran up and down her naked back before he cupped her ass and gripped her tightly, pushing her against his now rock-hard erection. She strained to feel more, silently begging him to undress her and ravish her body. One of his hands slipped down her bare thigh and brought it up around his hip, thrusting his body lightly into hers. She bucked and moaned as she felt his hardness so close to her, only a slip of fabric separated her from what she desired.

He groaned into her neck before kissing her deeply, passionately, once more. The heated kiss grew as he controlled her mouth the way she wanted him to control her body. His hand on her ass moved to the now uncovered flesh and she could feel his fingers grazing her wetness.

"No knickers?" he asked with a smirk.

"You didn't bring them to me, Master. I assumed you did not want me to wear them."

“Do you know what happens to slaves who assume things? Or slaves who willingly suck another man’s cock?” he asked huskily.

“No, Master,” she replied with feigned innocence.

He picked up her other leg and wrapped it around her waist, drawing her dress up around her hips and throwing her roughly onto the table in front of him. Her head hit the hard wood at the same time his hands grasped her hips roughly and he thrust inside of her.

“Oh gods!” she gasped as he started pumping into her tight heat.

“Wanted you all night,” he said, thrusting harder and harder and sending her body across the table until he held her hips in place with his fingers digging in with bruising strength. “Could kill Severus...taking what’s mine...wanted you...fuck you all night,” he continued before biting down on her unexposed nipple and causing her to cry out in sudden release.

“Lucius! YES!” she screamed as he pumped once more inside of her, allowing her pulsating cunt to milk the seed from his body.

Collapsing on top of her for a moment, he tried to control his breathing before standing up and allowing her to do the same.

She stood on her shaking legs with slight difficulty as he slid her dress down her body and let it crumple on the floor. Leading her gently the rest of the way to the bed, he nudged her to lie down as he lay beside her. She cradled him the same way she had before and a feeling of rightness washed over him. Shaking the thoughts that began swirling around his mind, he asked, “why ferret?”

It took several moments for her to realize what he was talking about, then she responded, “when Crouch, Jr. impersonated Moody, Draco pissed him off and was turned into a ferret. Apparently Crouch didn’t like you very much, and liked Draco even less. The nickname sort of stuck.”

“Yes, he was rather pissed that I didn’t go to Azkaban with the others. I personally had no use for the place. Are you hungry?” he asked, changing the subject.

“Not really. Thank you for feeding me before the um, party.”

“You’re quite welcome. There usually is a bit of dancing at these parties, tonight happened to be an exception. Do you dance, pet?”

“Yes, or at least I used to.”

“Ah, then you shall dance again. Tonight however, we sleep.”

She kissed his chest softly before snuggling closer to him and drifting off. She vaguely felt the blankets coming up over her naked body before sleep claimed her completely and she was lost.

-1Several hours later, Lucius awoke suddenly to a very strange feeling. He was laying on his side, as was usual for him, but someone was with him. Some warm body was curled up right in front of him and he had his arm wrapped possessively around her. It took only a moment for him to realize he was not at home, for at home, he slept alone. His wife had always been a cold woman, but since the birth of their son, she'd become downright Artic. She slept in her own room, stating that she simply could not sleep with someone so close to her, and only came to him when he ordered. Only in public did she even acknowledge his presence and he found that he liked the relationship they had developed. In Draco, she had given him what was required of her from their marriage, and in return, he provided for her. It wasn't until Hermione came into his life that he realized just how devoid of passion it had truly become.

Hermione. The thought of her sent his mind reeling with thoughts that he could no longer ignore, but that angered him for some reason beyond his comprehension. She had gotten to him on a level that no one else had even tried. Her beauty and intelligence were astounding, as was her ability to control him without even trying--an ability he had been denying for weeks now. As he looked down upon her sleeping form, he realized that only with her could he truly be himself. He brushed a strand of hair from her face and thought back on the night before when she had given herself so freely to him. In the beginning it was his plan to actually show her how superior purebloods were, to show her that she truly was beneath him. It took only hours, however, for him to realize that there was so much more to the filthy little mudblood than he had originally thought, something that should never be broken. That's when he did what he would have never believed of himself, he had made a deal with her. He told her that he would take care of her if she obeyed him. What the hell was he thinking? He was Lucius fucking Malfoy, for Merlin's sake, and he did not make deals. Yet, that's exactly what he had done. When it looked as though she would refuse him, he began to show her exactly what would happen and, after a bit of a struggle, she shocked him to his very core by responding so wantonly to his touch.

Since that night, he had taken her in ways he could only fantasize about before with other women. She was open to any idea he had had and even contributed a few herself, one of which was the way the

Dark Lord found them that night not long ago. Thoughts of the Dark Lord made him smile at her even more. It was very rare for him to actually desire someone else's slave. If he had any desire for a woman at all, like Ginny Weasley for instance, he would simply take them for himself until they were of no use to him any longer. The fact that he wanted Lucius' own slave sent a shiver of pride along the blond man's naked body. He thought there was a chance that Hermione might want the Dark Lord as well, and that simply amazed him, even more than her possibly wanting Severus--although she didn't willingly do anything with him, it was nice all the same to know that she might have. She was still his slave, after all, and the only way he'd be willing to share her was with someone of equal worth to himself...and they were the only two.

The young witch stirred beneath him and wiggled against his groin, making him groan as he felt the beginnings of an erection. Of course, that was his usual reaction to the woman he claimed as his own and he smiled slightly before lowering his head and kissing her bare shoulder.

Hermione woke with a start, feeling a strange warmth curled around her body and the most sensual mouth doing things to her neck and shoulder. She moaned loudly and leaned back into him, reveling in the feeling of being awakened in such a way.

"Mmm, Lucius," she purred, pushing herself into his erection.

"Good Morning, love," he murmured against her neck.

She smiled, knowing he had no idea what he kept calling her, and turned in his embrace as he propped himself up on one elbow and came over her. Raising her hand, she lovingly stroked his face, running her fingers over his jaw line and into his silky hair. She loved the feel of his hair gliding through her fingers and was amazed that this dark wizard actually let her do this. As her fingernails scraped his scalp once more, he lowered his head and captured her lips with his own. His strong hand roamed her body before cupping her breasts and gently squeezing, working her into a frenzy of lust and desire.

"Lucius," she moaned, "want you so bad."

His fingers caressed down her body and slipped quickly between her wet folds. "Mmm, yes you do, don't you, Pet?" he asked silkily upon feeling her wetness.

Arching her body, she silently begged him for more as her hands came up to grip his arms tightly. He slid two fingers inside her quickly and began stroking her clit with his thumb. She bucked wildly against him, moisture dotting her brow as the tension inside of her rose. She mewled his name over and over as he continued to stroke her, lowering his head and taking a hardened nipple into his mouth.

Her hands moved to his head to hold him at her breast as her hips rose wildly into his hands. She felt her body tighten everywhere until she thought she'd surely explode from pleasure. Several times she felt herself so close to release, only to have him slow his ministrations and leave her begging for more. When she thought she could no longer bear the tension, he flicked his thumb over her clit once more as he whispered in her ear.

"Come for me, my Pet. Let me feel your body tremble from my touch. Show me what I do to you."

She screamed his name as she clung tighter to him, her entire body shaking uncontrollably as he pushed her over the edge and held her there. Slowly, she came down from her high, her breath coming in rapid gasps as he softly chuckled above her.

"And what, Mr. Malfoy, do you find so amusing?" she huffed.

"Do you always do as you're told? If I told you to come for me again, would you?" he asked huskily in her ear as his hand began caressing her over-heated body once more.

Her contented sighs quickly became moans and whimpers once more as he worked his magic on her body. Every touch, every feel of his breath against her skin made her hunger for more of his touch. Her body was covered slightly in a glimmering sheen and she noticed with satisfaction that his was as well. The control he forced upon himself for her pleasure was amazing, and left her feeling intoxicated. All train

of thought was lost when he moved his body over hers and slid his hand down her long, shapely leg. Gently cupping the space behind her knee, he pulled her leg up to wrap around his waist. He rubbed his hand along her toned thigh and quickly slid his hard member inside of her waiting pussy.

“Always so wet for me,” he rasped. “So fucking wet and tight. Feels so good.”

His hand gripped her thigh harder and she dug her foot into his ass, bringing him against her even harder. “Lucius, please,” she begged, wanting more than what he was giving her.

Complying to her wishes, he thrust himself deeply inside her, before pulling out and slamming quickly back inside again. She arched her back and bucked her hips up into him, trying desperately to take even more than he was giving. Her breasts bounced as he thrust roughly inside her, until he moved closer to her body and pressed his chest into her, changing the angle of his thrusts and making her scream in delight.

“Fuck, Lucius! Gods, don’t stop, please don’t stop!” she begged unnecessarily.

“Bloody hell, witch! Feel so damn good!” he cried, thrusting into her once more and making her entire body shudder with release as she shouted his name over and over.

This was the sight that met the two intruders as the early morning rays streamed into the bedroom, casting a glow across the bed. They could see the muscled man, laying on top of the sexy goddess beneath him, how she responded to his every touch, his every word, and they could see the effects of her orgasm as her face flushed in ecstasy.

Lord Voldemort put out his hand and silently stopped his servant, waiting graciously until the two were finished and only moving into the room when the blonde groaned loudly and came inside of his shuddering witch.



Severus stopped short upon seeing what they had unknowingly interrupted, at least he assumed it was unknowingly done. "Fucking hell," he cursed inwardly, but found himself unable to drag his eyes away from the bed. He was shocked when Hermione gave a startled squeal and looked to the door. Lucius, in his post-orgasmic haze, followed suit and grinned smugly at the two, before quickly bowing his head and making to stand.

Voldemort watched them both silently, ignoring the smug look that he wanted nothing more than to wipe off the aristocrat's face. However, hexing him out of jealousy wasn't an option at the moment. He knew that, even among his ranks, there were certain "rules" that must be followed. A leader could not simply take away something that was given as a reward, for this would lead to bitterness among his followers. Considering he felt he could only truly trust Severus and Lucius, and occasionally Bella, he knew that the gift of this slave was one he could not openly take back. This knowledge, however, did not stop him from admiring the naked woman on the bed.

Lucius unabashedly rose from the bed and bowed to his master, before slowing drawing a robe from a nearby chair and slipping it on. Hermione lowered her eyes and demurely pulled the sheet over her body, flushing with desire as she watched not only Severus, but Voldemort as well, gazing hungrily at her.

"Master, to what do we owe the pleasure?" he asked, offering both men to pull up a chair and be seated.

Severus noticed his friends slip easily, but couldn't be certain whether the Dark Lord noticed it or not. The use of the word "we" would indicate Hermione as an equal, not as a slave, which made him wonder for several moments exactly how Lucius felt about the girl. The same girl he hadn't been able to stop thinking about since last night and the same girl that he was beginning to want beneath him the way he had just witnessed with man currently seated next to him. Shaking his head slightly and pulling his gaze from the sheet-clad witch, he turned his attention back to the rather important matters at hand. Even though he knew that when the Dark Lord visited your quarters, instead of calling you to him, things were far less formal, he

also knew having his thoughts stray from where they should be was punishable just as easily.

“You must forgive the early morning intrusion, Lucius,” he hissed, “but when it was discovered you were not at home, I felt it easier to find you here myself. We have been discussing, Severus and I, stepping up our actions in this war and making the Order come out into the open, possibly with Potter in the lead.”

Hermione gasped quietly, again surprised that they would talk about such things in front of her, especially where Harry was concerned. Lucius had told her previously that the only time Voldemort discussed Harry was with him or Severus. Very rarely was he discussed in front of the Death Eaters, and then only if it were something relevant to the current mission. She closed her eyes, feigning sleep, and listened closely.

“And what have you concluded so far, My Lord?”

“There is only one thing that I need now and that is for Severus to rejoin the Order immediately,” he said forcefully, letting them know that his mind was made up and arguing would be futile.

“Master, you do realize that the Order would trust him even less than they would trust me. Do you have any plans set in motion to change their minds?”

Voldemort smiled a sickly sweet smile at Lucius and said, “that is where you two will show some of your intelligence. You have one week, and one week only, to find a way to get him back in. I trust with your brains you will be able to come up with...something.”

He stood quickly and strode to the door. “One week,” he reiterated before glancing at Hermione’s sleeping form and then walking out the door, closing it quickly behind.

“If it were anyone else, I think I might laugh at the absurdity of it all,” Lucius said, still slightly dazed at the enormity of their new mission.

“Quite,” Severus agreed, his eyes flicking to Hermione’s now bare back on occasion.

“Like what you see, old friend?” Lucius smirked.

“What I would like, Lucius, is to find a way to do this without Potter and his ridiculous friends trying to curse me, again.”

“One week,” Lucius sighed, “he gives us one week to do the impossible.”

Severus snarked, “I suggest that you allow blood to flow to your brain for awhile so that you may be able to use it.”

“You didn’t seem to be complaining last night when it was your...”

“Granger!” Severus said loudly, “I’m well aware that you are not asleep. Get up and put your clothes on.”

Hermione grinned to herself, knowing that Severus was actually more affected by her than he was willing to let on, and it seemed to anger him as well. She rolled over slowly, allowing the sheet to cascade down her body as she stood up and moved across the room, completely naked.

“Bloody fucking hell,” he thought, trying unsuccessfully to lower his eyes from the witch before him.

“Indeed,” she responded, making him assume she was talking about her need for clothing.

She sat quietly in front of them, her robe opening slightly in the front and allowing them a glimpse of her breasts if they so chose. She knew Lucius would get wound so tightly that he’d throw her down anywhere and take her. She actually liked that about him, liked that she could make him lose control of his normally stoic self. Severus, on the other hand, was quickly, becoming a game to her, one she wanted to play to completion at this point. However, being unable to voice those opinions, she sat quietly and watched them.

"Tell me, Granger, do you have any ideas for this current situation?" he asked, and she noted that twice now he had referred to her as that, not 'Miss Granger' or 'Hermione,' but simply 'Granger.'

"Right, like I would actually tell you if I did," she replied heatedly, no longer feeling any fear towards her former professor.

"Hermione, watch your tone," Lucius stated casually, causing her to raise an eyebrow at him, but offer no words of apology.

"I'm actually rather surprised that you would even talk about such things in front of me."

"Well, it's not exactly like you can run to your friends, now is it?" Severus shot back.

"No, it's not," she agreed. "But it's not as though you actually trust me, or the reverse for that matter, so why ask my opinion?"

Severus took only seconds to laugh to himself at their current situation. He was sitting at a table with Lucius Malfoy and Hermione Granger, both wearing only robes. No one was discussing the position in which they had been found in earlier, or even what had occurred last night, but all were obviously thinking about it, which was rather absurd in the grand scheme of things. Surprised was the only word to describe how he felt at her complete lack of revulsion towards him, if anything, she seemed to be taunting him, which not only infuriated him, but turned him on even more.

"Because, Granger," he replied, knowing exactly how to get her to help them, "if we fail, your owner will be not only tortured, but possibly killed, which will leave you completely alone and defenseless to any attacks."

She pondered that for a moment before realizing that she could definitely take care of herself now. "I'm not convinced," she said stubbornly. "I don't think I should offer to help you return to the Order for two reasons. One, it's nearly impossible, and although I do love a good challenge, I feel that this is even a far greater challenge than

you two can handle. Two, if you attempt to go near Harry, he'll kill you on site."

Severus leaned across the table and snarled, "he could try, but I daresay he would fare much worse than I."

"Well then, make that reason number three," she quipped, completely unfazed, and shocked that she was so, by his anger.

Without waiting for permission, she huffed out of the room and into the bathroom. When they heard water running in the shower, Severus turned to his friend and said, "you allow her to take entirely too many liberties, Lucius. If it were me, I'd sleep with her only if her hands were tied and her mouth silenced."

"Come now, Severus," he said smoothly, only a hint of amusement showing, "you're only angry with her because she's right, and because," he paused leaning in closer to the dark haired man, "you want to fuck her and you hate yourself for it."

Severus looked sharply at his friend, noting the corners of his mouth turning up slightly, but didn't respond. They began throwing ideas around on how to infiltrate the Order, knowing that 'one week' actually meant 'three days or you're tortured for making me wait,' they wanted to find a way as quickly as possible, and Severus was sure they'd need Hermione's help. If they only knew what else was going on, their thoughts would have been on even more pressing matters than they currently were.

-1Hermione found herself miserably alone for the rest of the day. Severus and Lucius had been called to a meeting and afterwards, both were sent on missions. When Lucius breezed through to tell her it would be two days before his return, she almost begged him to stay. Two days! Sure, she'd miss his company, but the new, darker part of her was already screaming for release. She groaned to herself when she realized that she had turned into exactly what Lucius had wanted her to become; she was now a wanton slut. Still, she had standards, and when she heard Wormtail creeping up the steps later that night, she thought briefly about sending him flying back down before he could even reach the door. That thought was replaced by the one more concerned with how she could suddenly hear possible intruders, which was then replaced by curiosity. Surely he didn't think he stood a chance with her. However, Severus' words from before entered her mind she wondered if he was right, if she would be fighting off Death Eaters should something happen to Lucius. She was sure that no matter how powerful she felt, she would be thoroughly abused and then killed if given the chance.

Her concerns were unwarranted and soon Peter Pettigrew opened her door and quietly slipped in. He glanced at the bed, apparently thinking she would be there at this time of night, and slowly crept towards it.

"Forget to knock, Wormtail?" she hissed menacingly.

"Um, no, I..I...I don't have to knock!" he stuttered before shouting back at her.

She chuckled mirthlessly and watched as he visibly cringed. "That's right, Wormtail, you think you don't have to knock because I'm nothing more than a slave, right? Let me correct you there. You see, you, of all people," she said evenly, slowly sitting down her book, uncurling herself from the sofa, and walking towards him, "should cringe when you hear my voice. I may not be allowed a wand, but things...happen sometimes, and you are number one on my list, you dirty traitor."

"Don...don't speak to me that way."

“Oh, but I will,” she said, advancing further until she was standing right in front of him, dark power radiating from her very being. “I will talk to you any way I choose, traitor. You’re nothing, but a pathetic coward who sold his best friends for a meaningless piece of power. And what do you do with your so called power, Wormtail? Are you allowed a certain position in Voldemort’s ranks?” she smiled evilly when he cowered upon hearing the name, her words washing over him as his body began trembling. “Tell me, Wormtail, was it worth it? Was it worth spending 12 years of your life as the rat you should be?”

A stunning spell couldn’t have had more effect. He stood there motionless, watching her every move and listening to her every word. Soon, he straightened up and said, “the...the Dark Lord requests your presence. You m...must follow me.”

Her eyebrows raised quickly in surprise. “He does, does he? Well then, let us not keep him waiting, Wormtail.”

Motioning for him to lead the way, she quickly turned things over in her mind. Perhaps this was the night he would want to take her. Then again, perhaps he was bored and wanted someone to torture, one really couldn’t be sure with a man like him.

The sadistic part of her reared its’ head and as they made their way down the winding staircase, she barely flicked her fingers and watched with glee as Peter fell down the last several steps, only to land in a heap at the bottom.

“Damn, Wormtail, you almost ...well hello there, Mudblood,” came the voice of an unknown Death Eater below her as he appraised her scantily robe-clad body.

She quickly lowered her eyes and hid her smirk. Stupid men, so bloody predictable when it came to a woman. Did they all feel the need to drool, or was that just her own observation? She could only imagine being taken by someone like him, fumbling and fast. Gah! It made her stomach turn just thinking about it.

Peter stood quickly and stumbled for a moment. Turning sharply he pinned her with a glare and said, "what did you do?! You did something, I know you did!"

She was almost impressed, almost, with this new ability of his to finally say a whole sentence without stuttering. Those opinions were not to be voiced however, so she innocently shook her head and faked being scared. The whole slave thing was really starting to annoy her as of late and she found she needed an outlet.

"Come now, Pettigrew. We were all standing right here and watched as you fell of your own accord. The mudblood was several steps behind you," came another Death Eater's voice. Speaking in her defense?

The hall went silent immediately and Hermione glanced up quickly to see what had happened.

"Is there a problem?" Voldemort hissed angrily.

"N...no, M..Master, no problem," Wormtail stuttered and Hermione rolled her eyes thinking that his newfound vocal ability was rather short lived indeed.

"Crucio," he whispered and the beady-eyed little man dropped to the floor, screaming loudly in pain. It was a rather pathetic display to see and she hoped she could do far better if she were ever put in that position.

"When I told you to fetch the slave, Wormtail, I didn't mean hours later. If I have to do something again because you are so completely inept, then I will make you wish you were dead. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, M...Master," he whimpered from the ground.

"Slave, follow me," he ordered without glancing at her as he turned around and walked down the hall.



The other Death Eaters watched her silently, her head was bowed as it should be, but there was definitely something in the air around her that didn't reek of dead soul like most slaves. Most were more than a little curious as to what the Dark Lord wanted with her, but none had the nerve to actually ask.

Hermione followed him to a set of rooms at the end of another long hallway. The house was mostly dark now, but since this area was completely new to her, she tried to memorize everything she possibly could. The walls were bare and the floors were carpeted in what appeared to be a rich, brown material unlike any she had ever seen before. They stopped at the door and she watched as he drew his wand and made a complicated sequence of patterns before striding inside, allowing her to follow behind him.

"Wormtail believes you brought about his fall, is that true, Mudblood?"

She inwardly rolled her eyes at their continued use of that ridiculous name. Honestly, could they come up with nothing better? "No, Milord, I was too far away to have pushed him."

"Ah, I see, but given the chance, would you have done so?" he asked and she was surprised to hear a hint of amusement in his voice.

"Perhaps, Milord."

He chuckled for a moment before flicking his wand towards another door, causing a bag to come floating out. "The bathroom is there," he said in a quiet voice of silk that made her shiver with excitement, "put this on for me and look your best, but do not make me wait."

"Yes, Milord," she said, remembering to bow before doing as she was told.

Taking the box from him, she quickly walked to the bathroom and removed her clothes, thankful that she had taken a shower only hours before. She snorted when she pulled the skimpy silky material from the box. Damn Death Eaters, have they no imagination? Must everything be green?

Slipping the scrap of material over her head, she allowed it to fall easily over her toned form. She let her hair down and slowly arranged her curls around her face while she looked in the mirror.

"My, my dearie, I'm not sure if I feel more sorry for you or for the Dark Lord on this night."

Hermione quickly glanced at the mirror, surprised that it had spoken and quirked her eyebrows. "Perhaps you should keep your pity to yourself for the time being," she said smugly.

And now her inner struggle began. She was really quite torn about the whole situation. Sitting outside of that door was the man she was sworn to hate, the man who made cruelty and death a part of her life for years now. However, the darkness within her wanted him, plain and simple. There were no illusions of love or grandeur, she knew he would treat her only like a Mudblood whore. If she were truly honest with herself, she knew that that was exactly what she wanted. So what was the problem? What forbade her from allowing the darkness to keep her for the time being, the way it always did when she read those books or focused on it?

She took a deep breath and called for the darkness, allowing it to overwhelm her slightly. Then she hoped for the best. Opening the door she stepped quietly to the middle of the room as Voldemort watched her from his chair and she equated him once again with a king on his throne.

"Turn," he ordered just like the night before.

Slowly, she turned in a circle in front of him, stopping only when he rose from his chair and walked over to her. He began walking around her body, assessing her features with his cold gaze as she continued to look at the floor. His hand came up and touched her bare shoulders with feather-light strokes, making her shiver and arch her neck, silently begging for more of his touch already.

"Tonight shall be interesting, don't you think Mudblood?"

"In what regards, Milord?" she asked politely.

"In regards to the fact that I'm going to make Harry Potter's best friend scream my name as she comes beneath me."

A sharp intake of breath met those words as her body tensed and desire washed over her. The statement was quite crude, but the effect was astounding.

The effect was also short lived as he placed a finger under her chin and raised her eyes to meet his own. She shuddered in revulsion as she looked upon his pale skin and the red slits he called eyes; noting the similarities to the creatures he so favors.

"Explain to me then, why it is you desire me so much, yet look at me with such disgust," he asked slowly. "Must I force you to do what you so willingly do for Lucius?"

"Milord, I'm sorry," she replied as she lowered her gaze once more, suddenly realizing what the problem really was and that it had nothing at all to do with good or evil, "it's just that I'm not really fond of snakes and you look remarkably like one."

Cold laughter filled the room momentarily as he looked down at her again. "Not the answer I was expecting," he said thoughtfully, "but honesty is a pleasant change from the usual dribble I must force myself to listen to. You intrigue me, Mudblood."

She grimaced at the name, but tried to cover it quickly. Unfortunately she wasn't quick enough for him and he asked heatedly, "do you have a problem with being called what you are, Mudblood?"

"No, Milord, it's just that the name 'Mudblood' is growing rather tiresome. That's all." Deciding to be brave and say more than the simple answer required, she added, "imagine being called 'human' and nothing else, although true as it may be, it's still wears thin after several months."

Silently she hoped she hadn't pushed him too far. His temper was legend, especially if the stories Lucius had told her were true, and she almost feared his retribution. Most shocking was the fact that she

wasn't quaking with the fear like she should have been. It was as though her new powers gave her more strength and she valued that knowledge.

"It would appear that you have the inability to control your tongue as well," he said coldly. "However, you do speak honestly and without fear. Shame you're not a pureblood, you would have done well as a Death Eater."

Her gaze met his as she realized what he was saying. "The shame, Milord, is that blood should matter so much over general abilities. That I'm not given the chance due to my lineage."

"Are you saying that you would join me if given the chance?" he asked in surprise.

"I'm not sure as of yet, Milord, what I would do given the chance. However, Lucius has been very good to me," she purred, "and I'm content in my standing at the moment."

Quietly he stepped away from her, allowing her to keep her gaze fixed upon him as he slid his hand in front of his face. Eyes widening in surprise and breath catching in her throat, Hermione took in the new sight before her. Gone was the pale, snake-like creature from before and in its place was the most handsome man she had ever seen. That was truly saying quite a lot considering she thought Lucius a very handsome man. But the man before her was better by far. His brown hair lay perfectly upon his head and fell in waves around his ears, making her fingers beg to run through it and touch each of the highlighted strands. Eyes the color of scarlet still shone through, but the soft brown hue of his skin belayed any residual revulsion she might have had. His lips were full and sensual and she itched to kiss him completely. The body remained the same tall, muscular build, but she could tell by his hands alone that he was more tan and less pasty than before.

"Does this meet with your approval then?" he sneered, openly watching as she looked at him with desire-laden eyes.

"My gods," she exclaimed in wonder, "is this what you would have looked like all along?"

"Had I not lost my body because of your foolish friend?" he growled. "Yes. However, I find the other look tends to garner more fear from others."

"I bet you do," she said quietly, walking slowly towards him as he watched her.

"Are you coming to me willingly then?" he drawled silkily. "Or will there be a need to force you?"

"Milord, please trust that Lucius has done his job well," she said slowly.

Her hand came up to touch his face and she was slightly surprised to see his grimace before he hid it. She stroked his cheek and brushed her thumb along his lips before lowering her hands to his chest and getting a feel for the man beneath the robes.

"It would appear so," he said softly, the usual calmness of his voice now coated with desire. "Don't assume, Mudblood, that I will be gentle with you."

"I would hope not, Milord," she purred as her hands continued to move over him, making him groan slightly "but I must ask as to why you would want to lower yourself to be with me."

"It is not lowering oneself to fuck a mudblood slave, surely you know that. Otherwise, giving you to Lucius would have been a punishment and not a reward."

"Oh, I see," she said rather offended, but quickly brushing away the feeling as his fingers trailed up her arms.

Voldemort slowly grazed her flesh with his fingertips, enjoying how the witch before him responded. She was correct in her assumption of her unworthiness to him, but after seeing her with not only Lucius, but Severus as well, she had enveloped his desires. That was why he

had sent Lucius on the first available mission, so he could have her without having to take her away from him. Now, the need to take her was completely consuming him. He was going to invade her body until she yielded for him the way she did his servant. Surely if she could come so wantonly for Lucius, she would for him as well.

There was something else about her that he'd noticed in the last several minutes. He could sense the power she possessed and, if she still had her wand, he was sure she would use that power. He could also sense her own desire radiating off of her in waves. With the exception of one, the witches he took radiated fear, not desire, and their fear served only to infuriate him more. He had no wish to break this current witch, and if she came to him willingly, he felt they could both enjoy their encounters. Bella was the only other witch who took pleasure in being with him, but he knew that was because she was warped in her belief that she was actually in love with him. Love? He growled at the thought of how weak a person could be where that emotion was concerned.

"Are you displeased, Milord?" she asked cautiously when she heard his growl.

"Not as of yet," he answered coldly.

His fingers stroked the material of her gown and she gasped when it suddenly slid down her supple body and fell in a puddle around her feet. Again he walked around her slowly, looking her over curiously with eyes full of lust. When he was behind her, she felt his breath on her neck and shivered, tilting her head to one side to allow him access.

He chuckled icily as he lowered his mouth to her neck and bit down hard. Whimpering in pain and pleasure, she felt his teeth break her skin before he lapped the coppery tasting liquid from her neck. Her entire body was tense, but the more he licked and suckled on the area, the more her whimpers turned to moans and she relaxed into his touch.

"Do you like pain, witch?"

“Sometimes. When it pleases me.”

“I see,” he rasped, wrapping an arm around her and roughly grabbing her breast.

She arched her back into him, pressing into his chest and hardened erection as his hands began roaming her body. Slowly, one hand slid down her flat stomach and began to stroke her slick folds. Her loud moan reverberated through the room and she pushed herself on his fingers as they plunged inside her wet core.

“Such a wanton little witch,” he said calmly, using the voice that made her heart beat faster and her skin tingle, as he brought her closer and closer to the edge.

Suddenly he stopped and removed his hands from her body as he took a step back and licked his fingers clean.

“You will have your pleasure witch, but not before I have mine. Disrobe me,” he commanded.

Hermione quickly turned and was struck once again by the beauty of the man before her. She disrobed him quickly, allowing her hands to linger over his taunt body. He moaned in pleasure before pushing her roughly to her knees.

“Suck me,” he ordered and she immediately complied. Flicking her tongue out and licking the tip of his leaking cock. Slowly, she began to lick down his length, moaning at his incredibly large size and wondering briefly if she would indeed be able to take all of him. He gave her no choice as he shoved himself inside her wet mouth and began pumping forcefully. Taking as much of him as she could, she started sucking and licking with every stroke. Her hair was wrapped in his fingers firmly and he pushed her head quickly back down as he thrust up into her hot mouth.

Now it was his groans that filled the room as he forced himself further into her mouth and was amazed at how good she was. She moaned around his cock, sending vibrations along its' length and through his entire body.

“That’s it you filthy little mudblood, suck my cock like a good little whore!”

Sucking quickly, she took more and more of him into her mouth, reveling in the sounds of his moans and unconscious pleas for more. When she knew he was close, she cupped his balls only seconds before he groaned loudly and spilled himself inside her mouth. She greedily licked him dry before standing up to face him once more.

“Very good,” he said appraisingly before reaching out and running his hands along her sides and down to her waist. He pulled her roughly against him and kissed her hard. Gasping in surprise, she allowed him the entrance into her mouth that he readily took. Her hands gripped his hair tightly. His tongue battled for dominance with hers and he could only hope the sex would be the same. More than anything at the moment, he didn’t want a simpering little chit of a girl that he had to fuck, he wanted a passionate slave that was willing to fuck back.

As he felt himself hardening once more, he grabbed her ass tightly in his hands and pulled her body up. She wrapped her legs around his waist, never letting her lips leave his, as they quickly made their way into the bedroom. He threw her on the bed and immediately came over top of her. Kissing her neck and shoulders before moving down to her breasts as his hands roamed every inch of her tight body he could reach. He took first one nipple and then the other into his mouth and sucked them hard between his teeth, making her hiss and moan at the same time, as her fingers dug into his hair.

The air around them crackled and he lifted his head up, looking at her for a moment before slowly working his way down her stomach and to her dripping pussy.

“Amazing isn’t it?” he asked and then continued when he saw her questioningly look. “Hating something so much and wanting it even more. You hate me for what I am, as I hate you for what you are, and yet you can’t help your body’s response to me.”



Her response was only to scream in delight when his tongue flicked over her clit. Without waiting, he plunged his fingers inside of her as she bucked into him and begged for more, hoping he wouldn't stop this time as her hands once again wound through his hair. He continued his ministrations, playing her body like an instrument until she felt the heat curl within her and suddenly explode in a flash of ecstasy that left her panting for breath and unable to move.

"Merlin," she breathed after a moment as she looked at his unreadable face and he slowly crawled up her body.

He sneered down at her and replied, "no, I'm more powerful than even him.

She snorted slightly before responding in a cold voice of her own, "I do hate you, you know that, right?"

"I hate you as well, Mudblood," he growled before slamming his hard cock deeply inside of her until his pelvis hit her body and her fingers dug into his arms.

"Fuck!" she yelled without realizing the words were leaving her mouth as he pounded mercilessly into her and the air crackled with renewed intensity. She felt as though he were ripping her apart, but at the same time her body was screaming for more. Her hips rose to meet his every thrust and when he quickened his pace, she quickened hers as well, never letting him move ahead of her and always staying with him.

"Yes, witch! Fuck me back!" he snarled in her ear as he forced himself back inside of her and she met him over and over again. His mouth found her hardened nipples and he bit down with excruciating force, bringing another cry from the witch as blood seeped from the wound and he licked it greedily.

She clung to him as their slick, sweaty bodies fought each other to completion. When Hermione thought she couldn't take it any longer, when she felt as though her body would surely give out before it got what it so desperately craved, she felt his hand slide between them

and pinch her clit hard, sending her flying into oblivion as she convulsed around him.

“Tom!” she screamed loudly as her orgasm overtook her common sense.

His own orgasm hit him so hard that he failed to understand the name she had screamed. He came hard inside of her, as her muscles clamped on his swollen cock and milked every last drop from his body before he collapsed on top of her and her arms wrapped around him.

Slowly, he rolled off her body and lay beside her. She knew there would be no cuddling or touching after they were finished, but she was so busy trying to catch her own breath she didn’t even think to care.

“I’ve killed people for less than that, witch,” he said quietly, his voice strained in a way she’d never heard before.

“For having sex with you?” she asked confusedly.

“For calling me by that name,” he said sharply.

“Oh, I didn’t even realize,” she said, thinking back and suddenly remembering that she had indeed called him by the name he shared with his father.

“I suppose I can allow you that indiscretion while we are alone together. However, if you so much as utter the first letter when we are not in this room, I will make you wish you were dead before I finish torturing you, is that understood?”

“Of course, Milord,” she answered quietly, grinning evilly to herself.

“Why do you refer to me as such and not ‘Master’ like the others?” he asked after a minute.

“I will call you whatever you wish, Milord, but I do have my dignity still intact and would prefer to call no man my master. I refer to Lucius as

such out of respect when others are there and I will willingly do the same for you.”

“I was only curious, Mudblood, there is no need to change it. However,” he said, rolling to his side to look down upon her beautifully flushed and relaxed face, “I still mean what I said earlier, call me ‘Tom’ outside of this room and you will pay dearly.”

“Tom,” she said softly, looking into his scarlet eyes and testing the name upon her lips as she pushed a stray lock of hair behind his ear. “I think I like that.”

He looked at her appraisingly and then said, “get dressed, it’s time for you to go back to your quarters.”

Hermione made to stand and was immediately struck with a searing pain in her abdomen. “Good gods, that hurts,” she said, wincing as she bent over slightly.

A mirthless chuckle met her ears as Tom said coldly, “if you cannot handle me, witch, I can send Severus up with a pain potion for you.”

She hid her pain immediately and turned to face him. Bending over the bed she traced his cheek again, noticing he didn’t flinch from her touch this time, and replied, “I’m fine, it’s just that you’re slightly bigger than I’ve had before and it will take some time, and practice, to get used to you.”

He grinned up at her, an honest to Merlin grin, and said, “my ego is not at risk, Pet, and rest assured, you will have plenty of practice. Get your robe and come back to me immediately.”

She did as instructed and walked to the bathroom to pick up her robe. Slipping her arms through on her way back to his room, she tied it around her waist as she walked back through the door. With a snap of his fingers, she felt herself being squeezed as if through a pipe and closed her eyes tightly. When the feeling disappeared, she opened her eyes to find herself back in her own room and staring at the back of man with long, dark hair and billowing robes.

-1In a dark room, not nearly as far away as believed, Harry Potter awoke from the most amazing dream he had ever had. A beautiful, dark witch was wriggling and screaming beneath him, meeting each of his each powerful thrusts with one of her own. Obscenities were streaming from her swollen lips as he lowered his mouth and took her nipple between his teeth, biting down painfully until he could see the blood oozing around the marks. He licked her body as her moans filled the air and his thrust increased until she bucked wildly and came undone screaming the name "Tom" until he finished inside of her.

Harry sat bolt upright in bed, sweat dripping from his body and his inexperienced cock throbbing for release as his forehead slowly stopped throbbing. It took him only minutes to realize what he had dreamed, but as soon as he heard the name, he knew. He knew he was seeing what Voldemort wanted him to see, he just didn't know why. With Ginny, it was obvious what he was doing. Harry had to watch ,over and over in his dreams, as Voldemort brutally took his girlfriend until she became nothing more than a whimpering shell. When he had first dreamed about her, he assumed it was a normal dream from a young man's point of view; he missed her terribly and was dreaming about her. That was, until he realized she was screaming in pain and there was nothing he could do about it. The knowledge tore through him until it ripped out his very heart. Now, however, Voldemort was taking a different woman, only this time she seemed to enjoy it just as much as he did. There was something disturbingly familiar about her, but Harry couldn't figure it out. Deciding to talk to Remus in the morning, the only person he felt he could share something this embarrassing with and one of the few that knew about Ginny, he laid back down and tried desperately to forget how much he himself had wanted the witch from his new dream.

Hermione regained her balanced quickly and noticed the man standing before her.

"Severus?" she growled in disbelief.

"Ah, Granger, I'm glad to see you're back in one piece."

"What are you doing here?" she asked and then started to walk to the bed, only to double over in pain once again.

Severus was there instantly to keep her from falling to the ground. One arm wrapped securely around her waist, he led her to the nearest chair and easily sat her down.

"That is why I'm here, Granger," he said quietly. "I assumed when he sent Lucius away that it was so he could have you. When I came to check on you and you weren't here, my worries were confirmed." He handed her a blue vial of liquid and said, "drink this."

She threw the liquid to the back of her throat before asking, "Worries, Snape? Surely you weren't actually worried about me?"

"You have no idea." She heard the words, but his lips never moved, then another set of words came from his mouth, "The Dark Lord is not known for his gentleness, Granger. I would prefer my friend not come back to find his slave in a horrible state." "Although it would help me tremendously if he truly understood."

"Dammit, what is going on?" she asked loudly, jumping from the couch and visibly startling the usually stoic man beside her.

"Pardon me?" he asked after a moment. "Bloody chit has finally cracked."

"I have not cracked and I am not a chit!" she all but shouted at him.

Severus stopped cold, his eyes wide and his mouth hanging open slightly as he stared at the vision in front of him. The air was crackling around her and as her anger grew, so did the crackling of magic.

"Miss Granger, calm down!" he said sternly, hoping his authority from their Hogwarts years would catch her attention long enough to make her listen to him, before the rattling glassware on the shelf actually shattered.

Luckily it worked and Hermione immediately looked like a school girl in trouble, but only for a moment and then she glared back at him as she took her seat.

"Can you hear me?" he asked in his mind.

"Yes," she replied.

"Try to answer in your head."

"Yes, I can bloody well hear you! What are you doing in my head?"

"I believe it is you that has been in my head, has it not?"

She visibly shuddered at thought before saying, "that's just a creepy thought."

His lips turned up slightly and he responded, "indeed."

Hermione quickly glanced at the door, having the feeling that someone else was there again. Surprisingly, Severus also turned his head at the same time, before he looked back at her with an unreadable look on his face.

"Let us keep this conversation to ourselves, shall we?"

"Can you tell me what's going on? Why I can suddenly hear your thoughts," she asked calmly.

"How long, exactly have you been hearing my thoughts, Granger?" She could tell his voice was accusing, even if his face gave nothing away.

"Well, I wasn't sure if it was real or not, but I believe since the night of that ridiculous party; so last night."

"And did you hear many of them?" His voice was icy this time and the accusation was more than obvious.

She appraised him quietly for a moment, wondering exactly what she should tell him and still trying to skirt around what had happened between them at the party.

"Enough to know exactly which side you're on, I suppose. Enough to know that you prefer killing muggles as a means of stopping their torture, instead of joining the torture yourself."

"Then you've heard entirely too much! You have no idea the position you have put me in here," he snarled, visibly angry and definitely more upset than she had ever seen him.

"Now it is you who needs to calm down, Severus," she thought quietly. "I'm not sure what is going on with me, but being able to converse like this with you is just one of many things."

He thought for a second before asking, "was it you who made Bellatrix fall then?"

"How did you know?"

"Wandless magic, Granger? Since when? You have always been highly intelligent, but I didn't know you had mastered that skill."

"There is much you don't know." She sighed deeply before adding, "however, I believe it is time for honesty between us, so tell me why you killed Dumbledore and I will tell you my newest secret."

"Dammit!" he growled loudly, standing up and pacing around the room. "I had no choice!"

"In your head, remember?" she scolded.

Much to her surprise, Snape began telling her the details of Dumbledore's death, along with the events with Draco that led up to that point. She mulled them over in her mind for several long minutes before responding.

"I thought as much."

“You did?” he scoffed.

“Yes, I did. I didn’t know the details, but I knew there was more to the story than Harry was telling, more than he knew.”

“Yes, well, there usually is where he’s concerned.”

She grinned at his jibe before asking, “So what are you still doing here? Why didn’t you just go back to the Order and explain it to them. I know Remus would listen to you if no one else will.”

She fully expected him to laugh at her idea, instead, he gave her a very thoughtful answer. “I can’t. I believe you’re right about your wolf, but my job here is not complete. I can’t leave until it’s done.”

“What job is that?”

“I don’t think I’ll tell you that just yet. Now, you owe me an explanation of your own.”

“Right, forgot about that. All I can tell you is that Lucius has been allowing me to read many books. It seems like he’s brought his entire library here for me and most of them are of a dark nature. When I read some of the books it changes me. I don’t know how to explain it, but..”

“Books?! Let me see them!” he said brusquely, once again speaking out loud as he moved to the table laden with books.

She showed him her pile of books and he rifled through them, intent on finding something specific.

“He asked if he could borrow some of mine and I told him to help himself. I think he may have gotten a few that he shouldn’t have. If that’s the case...”

“If that’s the case, then what? Severus, what is going on?”

“Here it is! I knew it!”



Hermione grabbed his arm and turned him to face her. "Knew what?" she demanded.

"This book, have you read this book?"

"Yes, of course. It's one of the ones that...well, I can't explain it really."

"That makes you feel dark, more powerful, and detached from yourself?"

"Yes, I guess that's a good description."

"And were you, at any point, able to read the last page?" He asked, opening the book to the now blank page at the very end.

"Yes. It said something to the effect of issuing me with a dark power that I had to control. Like a test to see if I was 'worthy' of its' abilities."

"And you were. You, unfortunately, passed the test and now the darkness resides within you. You're able to call on it at any time. You're also able to converse with others that have passed, without anyone being able to intercept."

"That's why we can talk like this then?" Understanding started to dawn on her and she realized what he was saying, but still didn't know why he was so upset.

"Yes."

"Has Lucius read this? I can't read any of his thoughts."

"No."

"So, only you then? Why are you so angry?"

"Because, Granger, you have once again put yourself right in the middle of something much bigger than yourself."

"If it wasn't for this, I would have died last night. There would have been no way I could have watched that family be tortured and did nothing about it. Or tonight, I couldn't have b...been with him tonight, without calling to the darkness within myself."

"You've already called the darkness?"

"Yes."

"Impressive. Still, this means that for the rest of your life, you'll be fighting for control with yourself. You'll have many new powers, like wandless magic, Occlumency, and even Legilimency, that you never had before. You'll even be able to keep the Dark Lord out of your mind."

"I thought he tried that tonight, tried seeing what was in my head, but I thought of something else and the feeling went away."

"Yes, I'm quite sure he'd like to know what you know about Potter, but you can't let him find out."

"I'm well aware of that. Where do we go from here?"

"We? We go nowhere. There is nothing you can do, except for what you've been doing."

"What, being a sex slave for Death Eaters? I'm sure there's much more that I can do than that."

"Not if you want to live. Another thing, Lucius can never know about this."

"Why not?"

"He is a loyal follower of the Dark Lord, surely you know that. As different as his affections may be to you," he said with a slight wince, "he would still give you over to the Dark Lord if it was requested. Until I can convince him otherwise, he will remain loyal."

"I see. When the time comes for something, anything, to happen, will you let me help you?"

"We'll see. For now I must go. Lucius will return tomorrow night, but I fear you'll have a rather busy day tomorrow," he said, slightly disgusted.

"What do you mean?"

"The Dark Lord suddenly cancelled all plans for tomorrow, which leads me to believe he has something, or someone, else that he'll be busy with. Be cautious and be careful, Hermione, this is dangerous ground you're treading."

"I will," she said softly as she walked him to the door, "and thank you."

He looked at her appraisingly for a moment before nodding his head and walking out the door. Even though she didn't fully understand their new bond, he did, and the thought overwhelmed and terrified him.

-1The early morning sun came shining through her window and down upon her face, highlighting her radiance as he watched her from the shadows of the door. Her sleep had been fitful for the last hour, but now she was calm and peaceful; calm in a world where fear and chaos will soon rule. Little mewling sounds fell from her lips every so often and he suddenly began wondering who she was dreaming of. An unknown feeling overwhelmed him and he walked slowly over to her bed, gently stroking her hair out of her face as he gazed upon her beauty.

‘Such a waste of a witch,’ he thought to himself. ‘If only her blood were pure, she would be the elite.’

Slowly, his fingers traced up her naked calf and the length of her thigh. He reveled in the soft moans that fell from her lips as his fingers stroked her slightly wet folds. Gently trailing his fingers up her smooth, flat stomach, he lingered over her tightening buds. Rubbing and pinching her nipples between his fingers as she unconsciously arched her back and moaned louder.

He waved his hand in front of his face and transformed into the man she wanted, the man she not only willingly laid with, but seemed to want as much as he wanted her. He carefully climbed over her, spreading her legs with his knees as he lowered his mouth to claim her nipple between her teeth.

Her breath stopped, then hissed between her teeth as awareness overtook her and the sleepy haze wore off. Her hands went to his hair as he continued his gentle ministrations over her body. She knew he wouldn’t stay gentle, that as soon as the desire overwhelmed him, he’d take her roughly just like the night before. Calling to her darkness and allowing it to wash over her, she felt the need to have him overpower her wash over her in waves of desire as she moaned and called his name softly.

Entering her in one hard, quick thrust, he settled himself as deeply as possible inside her tight center. His hands continued to roam her body like a man starved of attention as he thrust his cock inside her over and over. When he claimed her lips, she claimed his very being and he knew he was lost. Thrust harder and harder inside her, he

began pinching her nipples and biting them harder and harder. He moved to her neck and suckled roughly as he cupped her ass and brought her body upwards, allowing her to meet each of his thrusts with as much abandon as he was giving her.

Their bodies meshed as one, a slick sheen of sweat covering them both as they tried to fight their release, tried to make the heated passion, the crackling of the air, the building explosion last as long as they could. Groaning deep in his throat, Tom pinched her clit roughly and watched in growing awe as she came undone beneath him. Her convulsing muscles sent him over the edge and he thrust into her harder before allowing his own release and coming deep inside her. He snapped his fingers and they both disappeared.

Hermione was startled by the sensation at first. Her body had just exploded around her and as she was coming down, she felt it being squeezed and knew he had apparate them away from the room. When she opened her eyes, she realized they were now laying on his bed and he was still gloriously naked on top of her. Waking up with him overtop of her like that was a startling discovery, but she'd be lying to herself if she said she wasn't thrilled. He slowly rolled off of her, but this time, he didn't act as though she should leave right away. Why would he when he could have just left her room when he finished? Slowly she began to refocus and turned her body to look at him.

"Ah, tim molisje, are you finally with me?"

She looked at him with confusion before asking, "What does that mean?"

"Be thankful I'm not calling you a Mudblood," he snapped.

"I suppose I am. Of course, you could be calling me worse and I'd never know," she replied cheekily and he quirked an eyebrow at her.

"Severus was right, you really are infuriating."

"He was only mad because I have the potential to be smarter than him."

"You better watch yourself, I believe you're very close to crossing the line," he said seriously, and she understood what he meant. Severus was not her friend, but a Death Eater, a highly ranked Death Eater, and she needed to be cautious of what she said and how she said it.

"Of course, Milord, forgive me."

"There is no need for forgiveness, tim moisje, if you say what I don't like, I will simply curse you."

A chuckle erupted from her before she could stop it and he glared at her. "Are you laughing at me, witch?" he snarled.

"No, Milord, I swear," she answered, trying to calm his anger quickly. "It's just that you really do have that much power and I find it astounding. With a flick of your wand you can do anything, how does that make you feel?"

He assessed her momentarily before responding, "Powerful."

"Having you always wanted to be powerful?"

"Yes. Power garners both respect and fear. Before this war is over, every living being will respect and fear me."

"There are other ways to earn respect as well, why not choose that path?"

"You really have some nerve, don't you?" he asked without menace. "The answer is simple, I'm evil. If I was, Salazar forbid, a Gryffindor, then perhaps I would care about such things as earning respect. However, I am a Slytherin down to my very blood and all I care about is power. My followers are loyal to me because of my power and together we will all reap the rewards."

"Well," she started carefully, wondering just how much of a conversation they could have on the issue before he hexed her horribly, "my Gryffindor belonging believes that the cost will be too

great for the rewards you plan on reaping, Milord. Perhaps that's why..."

"That," he interrupted pointedly, "is why I am Lord Voldemort and you are nothing, but a filthy, little Mudblood whore."

She knew immediately that he only said that to shut her up, to hurt her in such a way that she'd no longer continue. However, she also knew that the future of the wizarding world could rely on this conversation, or perhaps more to come, so she decided to shock him.

"You are correct, Milord," she said respectfully before rolling her body on top of his and pinning him to the bed. She registered first the shock and then the anger that flitted through his scarlet eyes, but bravely said, "And that is why, Milord, I shall reward you."

He went completely still beneath her as she lowered her mouth to his and began kissing him hungrily. He kissed her back with abandon, relishing the new feeling of having someone want him like this, while battling with the concern of giving up control to this little slip of a girl straddling him. When he tried to roll her on her back, she broke away from the kiss and winked at him.

Slowly, she began trailing kisses down his neck and along his shoulders, before laving his nipples with her tongue. Her own hands roamed his body and he found himself shivering beneath her when she bit down on his hardened nub. She never drew blood, but the painful pleasure sent his body reeling. As she worked her way down, worshiping his body with her mouth, he decided to allow her this time, just like Lucius had allowed her control. The feel of her hair trailing down his stomach as she stopped at his swollen member raised the bumps on his flesh and he curled his fingers in her hair when she licked the wetness from his cock.

Hermione couldn't believe he was giving her this control over him. She felt powerful and she loved the feeling. Knowing that he was only a mortal man when it came to sex emboldened her and she continued licking up and down his unbelievably large shaft, eliciting more moans from the evil wizard. When she took his balls between her lips, he groaned loudly and arched up into her as she pulled them

further inside her mouth and licked them roughly. As suddenly as she started, she stopped and began working her way back up his body. She could tell he wasn't happy with her for not finishing, but she wanted to know exactly how much control he was willing to give her. As her lips met his and she kissed him deeply, she impaled herself on his thick cock.

He broke the kiss immediately and yelled, "YESSS! OH FUCK!" as she rode him harder and harder.

She sat up straight upon him, taking him as far into her as she could and arching her back as moans of pain and pleasure slipped through her lips. It was wrong, it was treason of the worst kind, but she couldn't help it. She couldn't stop wanting this man any more than she could stop the sun from rising and she rode him for all she was worth. When his hands moved from her hips to her breasts, cupping them roughly as he thrust back into her, she felt the heat and intensity burning inside of her. The air crackled wildly around them and she felt the explosion from within herself. Throwing her head back, she screamed his name as her orgasm overtook her and he grabbed her hips, thrusting himself inside her harder until he came with her, calling her his new pet name louder and louder until his head fell back down on the pillows with his release. The bruises would be there later she knew, but for right now, as she collapsed on top of her enemy, she simply didn't care.

Knowing he hated the contact, she tried to roll off of him, only to realize that his arms were wrapped around her tightly and his breathing was still ragged. She inhaled his musky scent and took pleasure in the rare embrace. Then she heard the screeching, psychotic sounds from the woman at the doorway.

"M...master," came the voice, in a supposed state of calmness, but there was nothing ever calm about this woman and Hermione cringed as she drew closer to Tom.

"What is it, Bella?" he murmured, before pushing Hermione off of him and standing up by the bed.



As his robes flew onto his body, Hermione noticed that he had resumed his Lord Voldemort appearance, but kept herself from feeling repulsed. It was then that she understood what she had truly gotten herself into.

"Forgive me, Master, but the Mudblood? Surely we can..."

"Crucio," he hissed and Bellatrix Lestrange fell to the floor, withering in pain for only moments before he allowed her to kneel in front of him. Hermione watched with shock, sheet clutched to her chest, as he tortured one of his most loyal servants.

"Never question what I do again, Bella. I will assume your lapse in judgment was due to shock, but never let it happen again."

"Yes, Master," she whimpered.

"Now rise, and state your reasons for coming into my private quarters."

"They have returned, Master, from their mission."

"They are early. Did everything go as expected?" he asked with slight malice.

"It was a success, Master," she answered gleefully.

"Good. Then tell them all to be at the meeting this evening, I do not wish to be bothered until then," he said forcefully.

"Yes, Master," she replied.

Bella turned to leave, but not before glaring evilly at Hermione, who kept her head low and silently wished death upon the psychotic bitch who reeked of sickening jealousy.

"Elf! Breakfast!" he said and only moments later a tray laden with fruits and pastries appeared on the bed beside Hermione.

Knowing this wasn't the person to lecture on house-elf rights, Hermione only glanced at the tray until she heard the growling of Tom's stomach and he lowered himself on the bed beside her.

"She is gone now, tim molisje, you are allowed to...be yourself," he said quietly.

Looking up at his now beautiful face, she asked cautiously, "Will my being here cause any, um, problems, Milord?"

"Are you forgetting to whom it is with which you are speaking?" he asked coldly.

"Not at all, Milord, I just don't want there to be an issue for you to take care of later, that's all."

"I see. Bella is a very jealous woman," he said quietly. "Even though she's a married woman, she is the only female I have allowed to become a Death Eater and she has proven herself worthy time and time again. She is not a whimpering little chit and can take her punishments as well as her rewards. However, I believe finding me here with a Mudblood that belongs to her brother-in-law was a bit shocking."

Tom moved the tray from the bed and lay beside Hermione once again. Taking the initiative, she lay her hands on his chest and propped her chin on them. "Will you tell me about the Chamber of Secrets?"

"I would have thought Potter would have told you all about that when he killed my Basilisk."

"He did, from the prospective of a 12 year old. I would prefer hearing it from you, Milord, from the prospective of intelligence."

Tom began telling her about the Chamber, how he found out about it while in school and released the Basilisk within the castle. Many parts angered Hermione, but she kept her face impassive as she listened. It was obvious in the way he told the story that he felt he truly only belonged at Hogwarts, that that was his only real home. She could

also tell his need for power seemed to stem from a great desire to belong. He was given to Muggles as a child and never felt he belonged there. It was only when Dumbledore took him his letter that he knew where he belonged, where his home was. He began soaking up all the information he could get his hands on, much like Hermione herself, and quickly shot to the top of his class. It was when he learned of his true heritage that the hunger for power replaced his hunger for acceptance. He took his lineage seriously and began searching for the Chamber of Secrets.

"You left another monster behind as well," she added, trying to hide her true feelings and let the darkness show her nonchalance.

"What are you referring to?"

"The girl the Basilisk killed, she's called Moaning Myrtle now and she's a true horror."

"Mmm, stupid ghosts."

"Yes, I would prefer to pass on than to stay as a ghost as well," she commented.

"Pass on? The idea is to not die in the first place. To become so truly powerful that you are immortal!" he said passionately.

"And you've accomplished such a feat. It really amazes me that you have that much power. It's also a bit frightening how alike..." she broke off, afraid that what she almost let slip would surely get her punished.

"How alike what?" he asked sternly.

"How alike you and Harry are, Milord. I don't mean that as an insult," she said quickly as she noticed his anger growing, "but there are many similarities between the two of you."

He lay in thought for a moment, suddenly realizing that as he'd been telling his story, a story that no one else had ever asked him about even though it wouldn't hurt for them to know, he had been twirling

her hair through his fingers. He let his hand drop to the bed and answered cautiously, "Yes, I suppose there are. However, there are many differences between us as well, and that is what will matter in the end."

"You're right, and you're more powerful by far."

"Yes, I am. He'll lose everything before I'm finished with him and then he'll lose his life. And you, tim molisje, will have to deal with that. Deal with losing those that you held such high regard for. Do you think you can do that?"

"I'm locked up in this place, Milord, with no knowledge of what goes on outside."

"I see. Come, there's something I want to show you."

Tom got up and allowed the robes to cover him, before another set covered Hermione and he walked to the door. He wanted to show her what happened to those that crossed him, if only to remind her to never do the same. He allowed her a certain amount of leniency when they were alone, because he knew there was nothing she could do about it. There was no one she could go tell his secrets to as the only other people she was allowed to talk to were his two most trusted followers. He had also come to like her intelligence in the last several hours and found himself enjoying their conversations. Slowly, he opened another door and led her in.

The room was dark inside, but several candles offered enough light to see. A messy bed was on the far end of the lavish room and several books were stacked neatly on the tables. Another door on the other side of the room was closed, but Hermione could only assume, as this room so resembled her own, that the room was a bathroom. She heard the whimpering of a young girl on the couch and Tom led her over to it. Staring down at the girl, Hermione gasped in shock and called the darkness to her even stronger before her tears could take over and give her away. She could not let Tom know that seeing Ginny Weasley in this state was affecting her this way. She knew he had taken her and was sure he had tortured and raped her, but the

girl was weak, as she'd always been, and there wasn't much more she could survive through.

"My gods, Ginny," she gasped with her hand over her mouth.

"Pathetic specimen really," Tom said silkily, his voice quickly flowing through Hermione and making her shiver with excitement as the darkness took over. "This, tim molisje, is the biggest difference between Potter and myself. If I were to ever choose one witch, it would not be a sniveling little blood-traitor that couldn't handle herself for more than two minutes. She was broken before I barely laid a hand on her, but not before I felt the despair coming from Potter's brain."

"Hermione?" the girl said weakly. "Thank gods, Hermione, please save me." Her glazed eyes darted around, but she continued to look lost as she glanced quickly at Hermione and Tom. "Who's he?" she asked shakily.

Hermione walked over to Ginny, looking down at her tear streaked face as their eyes locked, even as Tom watched her closely. "What will you do with the blood-traitor now, Milord?" she asked coldly.

"You traitor!" Ginny suddenly shouted as she sat up on the couch. "You little bitch! How could you do this? That's You-Know-Who, isn't it? My gods, you're a slutty little whore, just like I always knew you were..."

**SMACK!**

Hermione quickly slapped Ginny hard across the face. She couldn't tell if the reaction was due to the darkness within her or an effort to shut her up before she said too much and got herself tortured more.

"Never speak to me again," she snarled coldly.

"Very good, tim molisje, very good indeed," Tom whispered in her ear as he wrapped his arms around her waist and drew her to him. "Let us dine on lunch shall we? We did, after all, miss most of breakfast as we dined on each other instead."

As he was leading her back to the door, Hermione heard Ginny's accusations of 'whore' and 'slut' ring through the room. Before the door closed, she heard Ginny ask weakly, 'what if Harry knew, this would kill him.'

When they sat back down on the bed with a new tray of food between them, Hermione asked quietly, "Have you shown Harry what we do?"

"Of course," he answered like it was the most obvious thing in the world. "I don't believe he knows it's you though, as he's acted rather favourably. He hates himself for it, but he wanted to be me last night and this morning. I could feel his desire."

"Is Bella in love with you?" Hermione asked, wondering about the dynamics of their relationship and trying desperately to forget what she had just heard.

"Love? Love is a fool's emotion," he replied heatedly as he picked up a strawberry and brought it to her lips.

The gesture shocked her beyond belief, but she quickly opened her mouth and began chewing the fruit. He took the other half and rubbed it gently down her neck and along her breasts before following along with his tongue, licking her body as though he were eating her for breakfast. They both stopped as they heard a door open again and Tom began swearing as his robes once again flew on his body and he snapped his fingers, sending Hermione back to her room once more.

Grateful that she missed his wrath and knowing that whoever had interrupted this time was sure to be tortured heavily, she made her way to the bathroom and began soaking in the very large tub. Tom had been easier with her today, although his thrusts were still brutal due to his size, but she could feel the ache inside her and knew that if he'd wanted to take her again, she would have been in agony. A vial of blue liquid appeared in front of her and, with silent thanks to Severus' keen insight, she greedily gulped the potion and allowed the healing to take place. She knew she could heal herself with the spells she had learned, but there was something different, something

touching, about having someone willing to help her, to take care of her, and she wasn't going to turn down his efforts.

After several long moments, she slowly stood from the tub and dried herself off before wrapping a robe around her good-as-new body and walking into the room. Only seconds later did the door open to admit two people she found herself longing to see. Severus came in first, a strange, but becoming, grin on a face that she was so used to seeing only sneering.

She smiled warmly at him and said silently, "Thanks for the potion."

Then she saw him, the one she had missed for what felt like months instead of only two days.

"Lucius!" she squealed before running to him and throwing herself into his arms and wrapping her legs around his waist.

Lucius stood thoroughly stunned for several moments before he wrapped his arms around her and held her tightly against him. He took in the smell of her still slightly damp hair and smiled to himself.

She drew back and kissed him soundly. "I missed you," she whispered.

"Hardly becoming behavior from a slave," he said, but at her hurt look and the unwelcoming feel of her body unwinding from his own, he added, "but I missed you as well, pet."

"I believe I will go now," Severus said, shaking his head in disgust of their display of sordid affection.

"I shall find you later, Severus," Lucius said, kissing Hermione once more.

She barely heard his warning as he quietly closed the door. "Remember who he is, Granger, and with whom his loyalties lie, before you foolishly give away your stubborn Gryffindor heart."

His words hit her like ice. Was that what she was doing? Falling for Lucius sodding Malfoy? As Lucius' lips trailed down her neck and he carried her to the bed, all thoughts left her mind and she welcomed each of his touches as she peeled his black, Death Eater robes from his body.



"Is my husband here?"

"Narcissa, how um, lovely to see you again," Severus lied as she walked up beside him.

"Severus, I'm looking for Lucius. Have you seen him?" she asked haughtily, looking down her nose at him like she was the queen of all things worthy and he was not one of those things.

"He's busy at the moment."

"He's with her, isn't he?" she screeched. "He's with the mudblood whore. He went to her before he came home to me, to his family?"

"Oh, Cissy, don't act as though you care. You only want to know where Lucius is so you can make sure your own lovers are gone," he snarled.

"Severus, you swore! You swore you wouldn't..."

"And I haven't" he said as he raised a hand to stop her, "but do not act like a hypocritical bitch, no matter how well it may suit you."

She glared at him for a moment before his attention was diverted. "McNair, what the bloody hell happened to you?" Severus asked, looking over Narcissa's shoulder at the man stumbling down the hall and silently thanking the gods that he had a reason to escape the retched woman.

"Do not heal him, Severus," Voldemort hissed, causing everyone around to recognize his appearance and bow before him.

"Of course not, milord."

"He has been punished," he said, glancing at the weak man kneeling on the floor as blood dripped from his nose and ears, "for disturbing me in my private quarters. That was the second time in one day that someone disturbed me when you were all ordered not to do so. Do not let it happen again. I do not tolerate disobedience."

There were murmurs of “Yes, Master,” around the hall and everyone went on their way when Voldemort walked back down the hall. Two Death Eaters stopped to help McNair to his rooms, but no one volunteered to heal him after the warning Severus was given. Severus, on the other hand, began putting two and two together, but kept coming up with five. Hermione just returned from the Dark Lord’s quarters, of that he was sure, so McNair must have interrupted them. But what would have caused him to torture his follower instead of listening to what he had to say, whether a slave was present or not?

“He tortured me as well,” he heard Bella quietly telling Narcissa. “He was with your husband’s whore this morning when I went in to tell him about the return of those that were on the mission.”

“Why would he curse you for that?”

“I don’t know. I saw them together and even waited until he was...finished, before I let him know I was there. He’s always wanted me in his bed, but he was allowing her to do things that he’s never let me even consider. There’s something about that filthy little mudblood and I’m going to find out what. If I run across her again, she’ll wish I had killed her when I had the chance so many times before.”

“I agree. My husband is rather taken with her and, although I don’t really want anything but his name myself, I also do not wish her to have him either. The scandal would be unbearable.”

Severus, who had already spoken to his long time friend about that exact thing, knew that Cissy’s husband was more confused than anyone about his feelings towards his mudblood slave.

In Grimmauld Place...

“Remus, I um, need to talk to you.”

“Sure, Harry,” Remus said gently, noting the warring emotions playing on his face. Harry didn’t realize it, but he was much more like James than anyone had ever told him. So much so, in fact, that Remus had very little trouble reading him. He could tell something was bothering him, something more than usual.

Harry turned to the door quickly and noted that everyone else was gone. Slowly, he took his seat and turned to the one man he trusted, the one man he knew wouldn't run away frightened or think badly of him.

"I, uh, had another dream last night. One of Voldemort's dreams."

"Are you sure, Harry? Was it Ginny?"

"Yes, I'm sure, and no, it wasn't Ginny. I think he's given up on her, which worries me almost as much. What if he's killed her, Remus? What if her mutilated body is laying out there somewhere and no one will ever find her? What if she never comes back to me?"

Remus noted the tears forming in Harry's eyes as his voice became strained with emotion. Laying a hand on the young mans arm, he replied, "You can't think that way, Harry. You have to believe in something good. You said Ginny is a fairly strong witch, she'll be fine."

Harry gave a soft chuckle. "You sound like Hermione. Always wanted to believe the best would happen. Gods I miss her. She's the strong one, Remus, I'm just not sure about Ginny. All her life she's had her brothers to take care of her, even if she's fought with them, she's still had them. Hermione's only ever had herself. Until Ron and I that is."

"Yes, and we both know, no offense, that Ron didn't turn out to be so great for her," Remus bit out accusingly before softening his words with a small smile.

"Or you either," Harry replied ruefully.

"So, what was last night's dream about?" he asked, getting back on track and avoiding the Ron and Tonks discussion.

Harry blushed slightly before replying. "Another of his sexual escapades. Only this time I couldn't tell who the girl was. It's like he's toying with me, not showing me everything, but enough that I should be able to tell who she is."

“And you have no idea?”

“None. But this one is different. I can tell how much she, um, enjoys herself, how much she wants to...wants to be with him. But I can also feel what he feels. It's just different and I'm not sure how to explain it.”

“Try, Harry,” Remus said gently, trying to ignore the blush that was staining the inexperienced young man's cheeks.

“It's like he feeds off of her energy, her darkness. And he seems to want her in...in other ways. I don't think he wants me to know, but I feel like he's confused when it comes to her, and I've never gotten that emotion from him before.”

“Does he...love her?” Remus asked incredulously.

“No, it's not love. Hell, I don't think he has that ability, but it's something.”

“There's more, isn't there?”

Harry looked up at Remus and sighed. “You know me too well,” he said softly, another darker blush staining his cheeks.

“I suppose so. What else is there?”

“He took her again this morning. Gods, Remus, she's beautiful. She was asleep when he went to her. She looked like a goddess and he touched her like one, too.”

“Could you see her face? Could you describe her?”

“No, he kept me from seeing her face.”

“What else?”

Harry took a deep breath and said, “I think he wants me to want her as well, to share her with him. I think this is some sort of sick joke for him and that's why he's showing her to me.”

“And do you want her, Harry?”

“Yes,” he mumbled, lowering his head to his arms on the table and refusing to meet Remus’ eyes. How could he tell him that he wanted her more than his next breath? How could he tell Remus that the woman Voldemort was seducing was plaguing his own mind? Or that when he took a shower this morning, he saw her body when he stroked his hard cock and came into his hand?

“Harry, that’s completely understandable. There’s nothing to feel ashamed about, but there must be a reason you’re seeing this. If I had to guess, I’d say you know the girl.”

“Know her? I don’t know anyone like that? Remus, she’s perfect. And what about Ginny?”

“Have you seen everyone you know without their clothes on, Harry?” he smirked.

“Of course not. I would just think if I knew a girl like that, I wouldn’t easily be able to forget her, that’s all. I suppose I’ll wait and see if I dream about her again.”

“That’s all you can do for now. Just make sure that what he’s showing you is real,” Remus advised, not needing to finish the thought and remind Harry what had happened in the Department of Ministries.

“I don’t think he could fake those emotions. I don’t even think he realizes he has those feelings for her. He called her something, too. He called her several vile things, but this name was different.”

“What did he call her?”

“I can’t remember, I was a bit, um, distracted,” he said honestly.

“If you dream of her again, concentrate on that, it could be important.”

“I will. I think I’ll go see if Ron needs anymore help. He still feels as guilty as I do about pushing Hermione away before she was taken. ”

There was something different in their lovemaking this time, something Hermione didn't understand, but took extreme pleasure in. Lucius had kissed every inch of her body, worshipped her body before claiming it as his own. His kisses were fiery and left a scorching trail in their wake as he kissed her everywhere he could reach, but not allowing her to return the gesture. His touches were light and gentle, but when she begged for more, he lost his restraint and they became harder and more passionate. He grasped her breasts and tenderly sucked her nipples into hardened peaks before he licked down her body and laved her folds with abandon. When her release had hit, she felt her body soar as he entered her wet passage and allowed her convulsions to pleasure his cock before thrusting inside her languidly. Over and over again, he took her body to new heights of bliss as he teased and pleased her. His restraint was amazing as he held himself back from release and watched her own each and every time. It was only when he felt as though she truly couldn't take anymore, that he let himself go over the edge and took her with him. When their breathing had returned to normal, he fell down beside her and held her tightly.

"That was incredible," she sighed happily.

"Yes, you are."

Looking up at his strange expression, she asked, "Lucius is anything wrong?"

"At this moment, no, everything is as it should be."

"I...I saw Ginny today."

"Weasley?" he asked stunned and began to sit up in anger. "How did you see her? How did you get out of here? Do you know what could have happened to you?"

"He sent for me last night, Lucius, the Dark Lord. And then again this morning."

“Really?” he asked in awe as a smile lit his handsome face and he laid back down with her. “And?”

She took a moment to realize that Severus was right. At this moment Lucius was very loyal to Voldemort and was actually happy to be sharing her with him. However, her growing feelings for this man kept her from being too disgusted with his ignorance. “And he showed Ginny to me. She’s a mess and I guess I’m just worried about her.”

“You shouldn’t worry about what you can’t control, Pet. It will do no good to linger on her. Was the Dark Lord...decent with you?” he asked, trying to think of the word he wanted to use.

“Yes, he was decent. Rough, but decent. We actually talked a bit and I find he’s a very intelligent man,” she answered, trying not to reveal anything else to him at the moment.

“Yes, he is highly intelligent. Do you think he will call on you again?”

“I suppose so.”

“Did you handle yourself in the appropriate manner?”

“Of course. I told him to trust that you did your job well and he was pleased.”

“You did?” he asked, surprised that she would commend him in such a way to his master.

“Mmm-hmm,” she said sleepily, curling up to him and nodding off to sleep as he stroked her back and fought down the jealousy that was raging within him. It was an honor to share her with the Dark Lord and he should be pleased, proud even. That’s what he’d wanted since he first saw the interest his master had shown days ago, so why did it feel different now that it had happened?

Hermione and Lucius were having another discussion about the differences in their lives when several hours later, Lucius grabbed his left forearm and immediately got up. He snapped his fingers and his robes flew to his body as he combed through his hair and tied it back

in a black satin ribbon and then slipped on his black leather gloves that never failed to make Hermione's heart race.

"I must go, Pet," he said, kissing her softly before turning and leaving the room.

One hour later he returned, face flushed and anger evident in his normally calm and poised demeanor.

"Lucius, what is wrong?"

"There's another mission early tomorrow morning and I must go. I shouldn't be long."

"Another one? So soon? I know it's none of my concern, but I've been here for many months now and you've barely went on missions. Why must you go now?"

"I believe, Pet, that he prefers to have those he trusts on these particular missions," he sneered as though she had just insulted him.

"I suppose."

"Sweet," he replied calmly. "Oh, and Hermione, there's a chance I'll run into some of your old friends. Shall I tell them you say 'hello' or would you rather I not?" he snarked, unsure why he felt so angry and why he was taking it out on her.

"Lucius," she gasped, "you mustn't be serious. Please Lucius, please don't hurt them."

"Begging for your friends lives, Mudblood? Do you so easily forget that you belong to me?"

"N...no, Lucius," she replied, tears pooling in her eyes as she watched him revert back to his cold self and his eyes harden into grey steel. "But I still care about them."



"You care about the wolf and the blood traitors? I thought I had done my job well," he spat, then turned and stormed to the door, picking his cane up along the way and draping his cloak over his arm.

"Lucius, please," she pleaded as she walked over to him.

His cane whipped out and the silver serpent struck her under the chin, stalling her movements and bringing her chin up so she would face him. Head held in place, he snarled menacingly down at her, his voice as cold as ice, "I do what the Dark Lord asks me to do. If those you loved get in the way, they will suffer."

With that, he turned and walked out the door. Hermione dropped to her knees and sobbed for the lives that had yet to be taken and the blood that had yet to be spilled. She should have told him to be careful himself, that he meant something to her, but he was suddenly so cold she found herself wishing he would leave and come back the man she had just made love to only hours before.

"Granger? I need to speak with you, are you decent?"

"Yes, Severus," she said, calmly standing up and drying her tears as he walked into her room.

"Why are you so upset? Surely Lucius being gone for a few hours tomorrow wouldn't devastate you."

"He was so angry when he got back, so cold to me. He all but said if he saw any of my friends he'd kill them. Anyone from the Order, Severus," she said shakily.

"I see. Lucius is a very jealous man, Granger. You must realize that. And there are several of your so called friends that tend to make him more so."

"What have I done to make him jealous?"

"I don't think it's anything you've done, but something happened at the meeting. You came up in the discussion."

“Me? Why were they discussing me?” she asked, slight fear lacing her voice.

“After some missions, the Dark Lord will give certain...rewards,” he said nervously, suddenly realizing she already knew that and remembering what his own reward had been.

“I’m well aware of that fact, Severus, but I would like to think we could drop the awkwardness between us about it. It had to be done and it was done.” However, she was inwardly grinning at his own nervousness. Gone was the snarky ex-professor and in his place was a regular man.

“Without the Imperious Curse if I might add. Did you realize you could do that as well?”

“No, of course not. Not until he cast it on me. It wouldn’t have been needed in the first place, but I couldn’t very well tell him that, now could I?”

“It wouldn’t?” he asked in apparent astonishment, making her grin up at him.

“Come now, Severus, you’re a very desirable man. When you’re not scolding me like a child that is. And you’re rather well endowed as well. I had...fun,” she replied, only a slight blush giving away her own embarrassment.

Severus turned and walked to the table, trying desperately to hide his growing erection from a woman he was coming to admire and respect more than just lust after.

“The reward for the last mission was surprisingly supposed to go to Rodolphus. He rather bravely asked the Dark Lord for a repeat performance from you.”

“Oh my gods,” she gasped, her hand flying to cover her mouth and her face paling significantly.

“Indeed. So while I’m doing some rather quick thinking, and I could tell Lucius is as well, we were both more than a bit surprised at his refusal. He made it plain that since Lucius did not wish to share you with anyone...other than the Dark Lord and myself,” he added a bit shyly, making her smile at the slight blush on his own cheeks, “that you weren’t to be touched.”

“Ok, so why would that make Lucius mad at me? It’s not like I did anything.”

“Narcissa is not a faithful wife and Lucius knows of this, even if she doesn’t realize it. He, however, is a possessive man when it comes to things that matter to him. He could care less who his own wife fucks, but you are another story. It seemed to suddenly dawn on him that if you weren’t here with him, then you’d be free to choose whomever you wanted and he doesn’t believe that your choice would be him. His pride took a hit at the realization and that angered him, that’s all.”

“Well, he has a funny way of showing what he really wants. But did you come all the way up here just to tell me this?”

“No,” he said solemnly. “I came to retrieve you for the Dark Lord. It would appear he’s become rather insatiable where you’re concerned, so I brought you a potion to take beforehand and I’ll give you another when you return. Just be careful. Bellatrix was very angered at her husband’s request and at her punishment this morning. She won’t hesitate to curse you so you must stay with me.”

“Thank you,” she said quietly. “Do I have time to...freshen up?”

“Make it quick,” he replied, turning to look at a book while she went into the bathroom and prepared herself for another turn with pure evilness himself.

Only minutes later she was clean and ready to go. Severus led the way to Voldemort’s private quarters and began to unward the door.

“He must have realized he had forgotten to ward his own door and that is why McNair was able to get in.”

Before she could ask him to elaborate, the door opened and Severus took her inside, bowing to his master quickly.

“One hour, Severus. Do not be late.”

“Yes, Milord,” he said formally before turning and leaving the room.

“Welcome back, tim molisje,” Tom said quietly as he changed his appearance and walked slowly towards the small, compliant slave of which his thoughts had kept his dick hard since he sent her away many hours before.

“I was rather surprised you called for me so soon, Milord,” she replied, head still bowed.

He walked over to her slowly and lifted her chin with finger. “Suffice it to say, I missed you. What is this?” he asked, noting the drops of blood on his finger that had come from her chin.

“I cut myself on a book, Milord, trying to move more than I could handle.”

“Pity,” he said, then lowered his head and began licking the drops from her chin. When she moaned and leaned into his touch, his hands began wondering over her body and pulling her closer as his lips moved down her neck forcefully.

Hermione’s fingers trailed up his arms and quickly pulled his robes off of his body, letting them drop to the floor in a puddle around his feet.

“Eager for me, witch?” he asked, a smug grin on his face.

“Possibly,” she panted as he lowered his lips to hers and divested her of her own robes at the same time.

Just like before, he picked her up and she wound her legs around his waist as his considerable erection was pressed between them. They kissed passionately as he walked them to the bed. Again, she found herself being flung unto the bed, but this time he didn’t immediately join her.

“On your knees, witch,” he said heatedly as he gazed at her naked form and thoughts of the other Death Eaters touching her drifted through his mind.

She complied, turning over on her stomach and coming up on all fours while he came up behind her on the bed. His slender fingers trailed down her spine lightly, sending shivers of response along her body as she tried to wiggle back into him.

“I believe you need to be taught patience, *tim molisje*.”

It was then that she heard the slap and felt the burning upon her ass. Unable to control herself, she let out a yelp of surprise and turned her head to see him. His face was a beautiful mask of control, but his scarlet eyes were alight with desire. She watched as he dropped his hand down to her ass again, only this time she moaned in pleasure, the darkness coming to her before being called.

“You like that, witch? The filthy little mudblood whore likes when I do this?” he asked, slapping her harder on the ass and then soothing the area with his tongue as she moaned in pleasure. His tongue continued to work its way down to her folds, eagerly lapping up the juices flowing down her thighs. She jumped in surprise when she heard the series of hisses and spitting she knew to be *parelstongue*, but her legs quivered in delight as the sensations shot through her body when his tongue flicked her clit again. He then slowly brought his body back over hers.

Grabbing her hair roughly in his hands and jerking her head back, he thrust his large cock deep inside her tight pussy, making her scream at the invasion. He slammed into her, brutally taking her as he pulled her head back by the hair and hissed obscenities in her ear. The attack was so forceful she found herself utterly and completely stunned when the pressure began to build and she came hard around him. Two more violent thrusts and he came deep inside her pulsating walls before collapsing on top of her and forcing her to the bed.

"My gods, witch," he said in awe as he moved off of her and pulled her with him, "no one has been able to handle me the way you do, much less get off on it."

They lay in silence for several moments until their breathing returned to normal.

"If all mudbloods fuck as you do, perhaps I should consider allowing them a chance to live."

"I cannot say what others do, Milord," she said quietly.

"Tell me what you know of Harry Potter," he ordered without emotion.

"Milord, you want me to betray my best friend?"

"Yes," he snarled coldly, "you will swear your loyalty to me now, or I will see you beg for death!"

"Of course, Milord. I just didn't want you to be disappointed that my loyalties had wavered from Harry."

"Smart, but don't try to play me again. As delectable as you may be, you will pay with your very life if I ever find your actions...unfavorable."

"Yes, Milord. Harry is a very emotional man," she started, secretly searching for what she was willing to tell him and hoping the ache in her body would recede before he took her again. "He is loyal to those he loves and would do anything to save them."

"Yes, I assumed as much. What else?"

Just then they heard the doors creak open and Hermione inwardly cringed, remembering what had happened earlier.

"We will continue this conversation later. Right now, I have to discuss other matters of importance with Lucius and Severus."

As he stood, elegant robes flew to his body and he walked to the door. "You may join us if you wish, we are, after all, discussing your former allies."

She felt her own body being covered in light blue silk robes, much unlike the regular bathroom robes she had become accustomed to. Slowly, she made her way to follow.

As the formalities were given, she watched Lucius closely, noticing his easy stride that demanded attention, along with his blond hair that she loved touching. She could tell by the set of his shoulders and the tick in his cheek that he was still angry, but that was overcome when he saw her standing there. A look of unbelievably sexy surprise covered his features as he stared in her direction and his eyes locked with hers. She could sense his remorse, but also the inability to give her what she needed most.

"Severus, have you found a way back into the Order yet?" Tom hissed, breaking their connection.

Hermione thought quickly. They were supposed to have a week, so why was he asking so soon? It had only been days and Lucius was gone for most of them. Her gaze roamed the sitting area as she tried desperately to think of a way to help Severus, and even Lucius, when it landed on the door that housed Ginny.

"Severus," she thought quickly to him.

"I'm busy," he snarled back, but she could sense a hint of panic in his thoughts.

"I'm well aware of that fact, thank you. Now, use Ginny! Use Ginny to get back in the Order."

"The Weasley brat? How will that...I see. Excellent Granger!"

"Yes, Milord, I have," he said smoothly, ignoring Lucius' shocked and relieved expression.

"And?"

"If I could take the blood traitor back to them, tell them I rescued her from you, then they would believe I was still with them."

"Take her back?! Why would we give Potter what he wants? I have him wallowing in his own despair as it is and if she were returned, he would be happy. I do not want him happy, Severus."

"Yes, Milord, but he would also be grateful, and most importantly, indebted, to me."

"What are your thoughts, tim molisje? You know Potter best, what do you think?"

Hermione took a moment to gather her thoughts, knowing that the plan she suddenly had started formulating could be made or broken right now. It was during those few moments that she noticed several more things about Lucius. He was obviously surprised that the Dark Lord still looked like Tom Riddle in front of her and to say that he looked unhappy that her opinion had been asked would have been a severe understatement.

Walking over and joining them at the table, she assessed the Dark Lord quickly and realized that the dynamics of their own relationship wouldn't change entirely with these two particular men present.

"I believe, Milord, that Severus is right."

With a wave of his hand, the door opened to Ginny's room and she began floating out, only to land in a whimpering heap on the floor.

"Explain your reasoning," he stated coldly, simply using a look to silence the indignant cries from the red-head as she realized who was in the room.

"If you send her back to Harry in this state, knowing that he knows what has transpired between the two of you, he will be torn in his emotions as well. He'll immediately be overjoyed and grateful to have her back, which will allow Severus the entry into the Order that you seek. However, his own punishment will come when he remembers,



repeatedly, who she has been with. His guilt at allowing that to happen will eat at him, but he'll find himself unable to touch her, much less look at her, out of disgust and a feeling of betrayal that she had nothing to do with. You'll do more emotional damage to him by sending her back, than by keeping her here, Milord."

"YOU BITCH! HOW DARE YOU HURT HARRY?! HE'LL KILL YOU, YOU WHORE!"

Hermione stood and walked over to Ginny, "Milord, if I may?"

"Of course," he said, a slight smirk on his handsome features as he watched the woman that had him thoroughly intrigued.

"Harry abandoned me first, you stupid little girl. He'll kill me, if he gets the chance, but if you refuse to shut your own mouth, I may very well kill you before you get to see him again. We'll send you back to him in little pieces. And I know I'm right. He'll never touch you again and all of your 'Lady Potter' dreams are as good as gone."

Ginny's mouth gaped open and she heard the laughter from the men behind her.

"My gods, Granger, you're a genius!"

"I'll remind you of that later."

She calmly walked back over to the table and sat down.

"I'm very impressed, tim molisje, perhaps there are several exceptions that could be made for you yet."

Several days passed for Hermione, coated in trepidation that was made no better with Severus' help.

"Again, Granger, I have no idea what he meant about making exceptions for you, but it could not have been good," he sighed wearily.

"He'll have to kill me before I take someone else's life. New Darkness or not, I just can't do that, Severus."

"I am well aware of that, little Gryffindor, but I believe we should just wait and see. I don't see him allowing a muggle born to become a Death Eater. It would show him as hypocritical and I do not think he'd want to be seen that way for you."

"But he IS a hypocrite!"

"Yes, but allowing you to join the ranks with those of the Malfoys and Lestranges would only lead to dangerous situations. Not only for you, but himself as well. Just bide your time and see what comes. He's only called for you once since then, right?"

"No, several times, but these times we didn't talk very much."

"You usually talk?"

"A lot, actually. He's very intelligent and can be rather charming."

"I also noticed that he has shown you his other appearance."

"That's the way he always looks with me. Ever since the first time when I told him he looked like a snake and snakes creep me out."

Severus laughed outright before replying, "You are lucky that you were not cursed. I've watched him with you, Granger, and to say that I am concerned about his obsession with you would be an understatement. Just be careful."

"I will be. As careful as possible that is. So, have you met with the Order? How are they? Have you talked to Remus? Tell me what's going on, Severus, I've not seen you or Lucius in days."

"Calm down, Granger, you're giving me a headache," he said, the corners of his lips twitching slightly as he watched her bounce in excitement. "The Dark Lord has kept Lucius away from you on the pretense of missions and such, which is actually working in our favor."

"What? How?"

"Lucius seems to miss you. He is also becoming increasingly angry with the Dark Lord for stealing you away from him. I'm trying to use this to persuade him of our cause, without letting him know that that is what I'm doing."

"Mmm, I see. When he does get to come back, I'll subtly try and help you with that."

"Great, you getting in deeper is NOT what I need, Granger. What are your feelings towards Lucius, if I may ask."

"Manners, Severus? I never expected such a thing."

He scoffed at her cheek and waited patiently for her answer. "Well, he's very intelligent, can be charming when he wants to be, has an aura of power that turns me on. Let's see, he takes care of me and he's a very generous lover. I'm quite fond of him actually."

"You do realize you describe him and the Dark Lord in the same ways."

"No, I didn't," she replied, looking very confused and a bit frightened before deciding to change the topic. "Now, the Order?!"

"Ah, yes." he said, allowing the change, but vowing to keep a closer eye on her developing feelings for both wizards, neither of which would lead the young witch anywhere but to heartache. "I took your

advice actually and contacted your wolf. Lupin is going to meet with me today to discuss things.”

“Only Remus?”

“Yes, he seems to agree that Potter’s emotions would get the better of him and the meeting would be far from productive.”

Hermione laughed outright. “He’s right. Does he trust you?”

“Of course not! I took away the one person he could rely on, how do you think he feels. Aside from his little girlfriend, he has no one to share his confidences with. I’m surprised he agreed to meet with me, but then again, he could very well kill me on sight.”

“Um, talk to him about me. See if that helps.”

“You? I know you two are friendly, but why would talking about you help? Other than to say you’re alive and in one piece?”

“Remus and I had become very close before I was taken. If you tell him what I’m telling you, then he’ll know you speak the truth and that I’m working with you to help them.”

“Okay, explain.”

“About two months before my last mission, I walked into Ron’s bedroom and found something rather disturbing.”

“Granger,” he said, holding up his hand to stop her, “if you’re going to tell me Lupin and Weasley were in bed together...”

“NO! It was actually Ron and Tonks. Needless to say I was devastated. Remus and I were on a mission and when we got back I was so happy to see Ron and Harry that I ran to Ron’s room and threw open the door. Remus was behind me on his way to their room and saw what I saw. He kept me from cursing Ron into another realm. It was like he just accepted the fact that it would happen and was ready for it.”

"I would imagine with as little happiness as he's had in his lifetime, he probably expected something would happen."

"That's so sad. I was heartbroken and Remus helped me through it. Ron started to yell at me, telling me it was my fault for being frigid and cold. That I was unlovable and all that, and before long, he stopped talking to me altogether. Harry tried to stay friends with both of us, but I was basically just pushed away with only Remus to talk to. He and Harry stayed close, I suppose, but the strain on everyone was unbearable and getting worse as time went on. When I went on that mission, I was actually contemplating moving out."

"That would have been stupid."

"Why? Think I'd get captured by Death Eaters or something?" she asked cheekily.

"Probably," he answered out loud when he heard their eavesdropper leave the hallway by the door. "Entirely too many ears around here, Granger, be careful."

"You be careful. And tell Remus 'hello' for me."

The door opened slowly and they both looked up to see Lucius walking in. Hermione rushed to his side when she realized he was bleeding.

"Lucius, you're hurt!" she said, leading him to the chair and then taking his cloak and cane and setting them down on the table.

"Yes, that happens. Miss me?" he asked, shooting a wry grin as she continued to fuss over him.

She was amazed at the way his face changed when he smiled and relaxed around her. Smiling broadly, she answered, "more than you know, Lucius."

She walked to the bathroom and got a rag and small bowl of warm water and brought it back to the table. She sat on the table itself and

took his hands in her own, tenderly touching his small cuts before taking the rag and cleaning them off as gently as possible.

"I could heal those, you know?" Severus asked amused.

"Sod off, Severus," Lucius mumbled, his eyes never leaving Hermione as she worked to take care of him. No one had ever taken care of him before and his heart swelled with each of her gentle caresses.

Chuckling to himself, Severus stood and walked out of the door, knowing exactly where her attentions would lead the couple and not wanting to be a witness to such things.

"I missed you, Pet," he said softly, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear.

"I'm glad," she said, straddling his legs to get better access to the wounds on his face. She cleaned each one diligently, grinning to herself when he winced at her touch on a few of the deeper cuts. "I wish you didn't have to leave me, love," she purred. "I miss you terribly when you're gone. I mean, I understand you have to do the Dark Lord's bidding and all, but..."

Her words were cut off when he leaned in and captured her lips with his own. The kiss was gentle at first, but quickly became heated and passionate as she eagerly returned his advances. Breaking the kiss, his hands fell to her black, silk bathrobe and he trailed his fingers up and down between her breasts.

"You really are quite lovely," he said. "I have a surprise for you."

"Really?" she asked, slightly distracted by his hands skimming the inside of her breasts as he moved the silk out of the way. "I love surprises!"

"I know you do," he mumbled, lowering his head to one uncovered breast to lick and suckle her nipple into a hard nub. "I bought you another dress for the next party."

When he felt her body tense, he lifted his slightly confused gaze up to meet hers. "You don't want a new dress?"

"I...I don't know if I can watch something like that again, Lucius," she said, voice trembling slightly.

"Ah, I see. This party is different. It's the dance I was telling you about. There won't be any muggles in attendance in any way. That better?"

"Very! Can I see my dress?"

"Sure," he purred silkily against her other breast, "as soon as I'm done ravishing your sexy little body, I'll show you the dress I went to so much trouble to procure."

A soft moan escaped her lips as his mouth worked its way up to her throat and his hands cupped her ass and pulled her into his erection. Her small hands began working on his robes, quickly pulling them off of his broad shoulders as her nails scraped against his gorgeous skin and down his muscled arms. She let her mouth follow her fingers, trailing hot kisses along his neck and shoulders, then down his chest to flick across his nipples and making him moan as he held the back of her head.

She scooted backwards and slowly kissed down his stomach, following the sparse golden hairs that sprinkled beautifully over his body, but concentrated in a wonderful little trail that never failed to lead her to happiness. She peeled his clothes from his body and he sat on the chair, gloriously naked and staring at her with lust filled eyes. She knelt in front of him and lowered her fingers to his magnificent cock. Slight moisture was weeping from the tip and she flicked her tongue out to lap it, causing him to fist his hand in her hair and throw his head back. She took his length in her mouth and languidly sucked and licked him until he began thrusting his hips lightly.

"Gods, Hermione!" he sighed.

After several long moments of sweet torture, he growled at her, "Come here, witch. Let me have your body."

Easily complying to his wishes, she crawled her way up his body and kissed him deeply as she straddled his legs. He pulled the tie of her robe and slowly pushed it off her shoulders and around her hips, allowing it to lay there as his gaze roamed her now naked perfection of beautiful breast, flat stomach, and amazingly wet pussy.

"I love your tits," he breathed, again kissing and touching her until she thought she'd explode.

"Lucius, please," she begged.

Slowly, he pulled her closer to him and guided his erection into her wet, waiting passage. "Oh yes, made for me, baby," he rasped, gripping her hips and moving her further down on him.

Hermione began rocking slowly on his cock, loving the sensations and his perfect size. She needed no dark powers to make love with this wizard--he was perfection made over in her opinion and she loved every feeling that ran through her wanton body as he touched her and she touched him in return.

Gradually, teasingly, she began moving up and down his thick cock, reveling in the feeling and the soft moans falling from his lips as he watched the point where they joined.

"You're so wet. So beautiful," he said again, pulling her down for a heated kiss that made her body respond with passionate fury. Her hips quickened their pace and his hands held on tightly, bruising in their strength as he thrust up inside of her.

"Touch yourself," he commanded after releasing her lips and watching her body. He kept his eyes on her hand as she slowly stroked her way from her breasts and down her stomach. Moaning in pleasure as he thrust harder into her willing body, she slid her hand down to her clit and began rubbing it furiously. "Yes, that's it. Come for me baby! Let me watch as you pleasure yourself and tighten around me."



His rough voice and promising demands were her undoing. With a pinch of her clit, she felt her body burn and explode, pulling a scream from her throat as she tightened and convulsed around his cock. With two more thrusts he came with her, spilling his seed deep within her body before she collapsed onto his shoulder and he breathed the scent of her hair.

“Gods, Lucius, that was incredible.”

He chuckled softly and replied, “it usually is with you, love.”

She sat up with a look of mock pain and anger on her face. “Usually? Only usually?”

Grinning at her, he said, “yes. Perhaps we should work harder to make it always.”

She playfully slapped his chest. “Git,” she said as she climbed off of him.

His muscles tensed immediately and she was afraid for a moment that her teasing had went too far. He had laughed after all, so why was he suddenly tense?

“Enjoy the show, son?” he said angrily, making her whip her head around to the door and wonder for a moment how she could not have heard him with her new abilities.

Lucius stared at his son, but, surprising them all, covered Hermione with her robe as he stood, gloriously naked, and faced his son.

“Actually, Father,” Draco spat, glaring daggers in Hermione’s direction, “I came to find you for Mother. You know, your wife? She’s looking for you.”

“My wife, Draco, is probably with Rebastan as we speak. Now, what’s your real reason for being here, boy?” he asked coldly.

“Rebastan? How dare you insinuate that Mother would do something...”

"I state only what I know, son. If you are through here, then I suggest you leave. Perhaps the next time you go on a mission, the Dark Lord will present you with a slave all of your own. I do feel sorry for the poor girl, I must say."

"The last thing I want is a filthy little mudblood in my bed," he said just as coldly, before turning and walking from the room.

"Oh gods," Hermione gasped, still mortified that Draco had seen her, not only naked, but in the throes of passion with his father.

"He'll get over it, I'm sure. Although, I'm not clear just where I went wrong with the boy. I know most of my old prejudices have been engrained in him, but it would seem respect was lost along the way, along with humility and compassion."

"He's been rather vile since I've known him, love, but he turned more so his sixth year."

"Yes, I would gather that my imprisonment didn't help matters. His mother coddles him too much, spoils him into being weak."

"I was thinking more along the lines of taking the Dark Mark. It seems to have inflated his ego and sense of self a bit more."

Lucius looked at her appraisingly as he finished dressing. "You could be right. However, he is still my son and I still love him, brat that he is. I suppose I should go find Narcissa, just in case."

"What about my dress?" she asked sweetly.

Laughing, he kissed her lips and replied, "I'll bring it to you tonight."

"Harry, you look horrible, mate."

"Thanks, Ron," Harry said sarcastically as he plopped down on the couch beside Remus.

“Perhaps a Sleeping Draught would help, Harry,” Remus said supportively as he glanced at his pocket watch once more.

“Maybe,” Harry said distractedly. The truth of the matter was, he wanted to have these dreams. No longer were his nightmares about Ginny, his own girlfriend, being raped over and over by the man he hates more than any other. Now, they were filled with amazing sexual encounters with a witch who had the most incredible body he’d ever seen. Numerous times now, he’d gotten himself off reliving the dreams from the night before. A few times, he’d found himself alone and a dream would wash over him when he dozed off during the day.

“I caught the name this time, Remus,” he said quietly.

Remus sat up straighter and listened intently to Harry. “It’s ‘tim molisje’.”

“Aw, Harry, are you talking about my sister again?” Charlie asked teasingly as he walked behind Harry and put his hand on his shoulder. “Sorry, that was in bad taste, I didn’t mean anything by it.”

“What are you talking about, Charlie?” he asked confusedly as Remus looked at Charlie and Ron just looked confused by the entire exchange.

“You were talking about your weakness, I just assumed it was Ginny. But joking about it is in very bad taste and I’m sorry,” he said seriously, before asking, “When did you learn Albanian anyway? I only picked up a bit of it in Romania.”

Harry and Remus, aware of the implications and the seriousness of Charlie’s flippant comment, stared gobsmacked at the red-haired dragon tamer. Remus recovered a bit faster and asked, “is that what it means? My weakness?”

“Yea, I assumed he knew that since he was saying it and all,” Charlie replied, confusion etched on his face as he looked at them all like they’d gone mental.

“Um, no,” Harry said, finally finding his voice again, “it’s what Voldemort calls someone. I had no idea what it meant.”

“He calls someone his weakness? I thought he wasn’t supposed to have any weaknesses.”

“I think she’s more of an obsession, actually. But it’s become his name for her and he uses it out of habit more so now than anything, I believe.”

“So, who’s the girl?”

“I don’t know.”

“Find her and you’d have some serious leverage.”

“I know Charlie, but it won’t be that simple. If she truly is a weakness for him, he’ll have her locked up tighter than Fort Knox.”

“Huh?”

“Never mind, muggle expression.”

Remus stood abruptly, his mind still whirling. “I have to go out. I’ll be back shortly.”

Drawing his wand and quietly walking up behind the dark haired wizard, Remus quickly pushed the tip into the man’s ribs and hissed, “hand me your wand, Severus, and don’t move.”

“I could kill you where you stand, wolf,” he replied, but slowly handed the man his wand.

“You could try, I suppose. Why are we meeting here?” he asked. The room was dark and dank, smelling of mold and death to the werewolf’s sensitive nose.

“Obviously, we’re here because I’m wanted for murder. Taking a leisurely stroll through Diagon Alley would surely have someone recognizing me.”

"Yes, speaking of which," he snarled, jabbing his wand further into Snape's ribs, "what the fuck do you want?"

"Lupin, do not attempt to be as stupid and emotional as Potter. You are far too intelligent for that."

"Really? Well then, start from the beginning and let us go from there."

"Get your wand away from me before I hurt you."

Remus watched the wizard for a moment, seeing glimpses of guilt and trepidation in his normally cool demeanor, and lowered his wand. They took seats across from each other at a small table and Severus slowly began speaking.

"Dumbledore was dying. The curse that killed his arm had invaded his body and was killing him. He knew that in the end, Draco wouldn't be able to do what was tasked of him and that I would have to finish it. I'm sure Potter has given you his skewed view of the events, but, as always, there's more to things than the hothead realized."

"I thought as much, actually, but I'd appreciate it if you'd keep your remarks of him to yourself. Now, tell me why you didn't come right out and say this when it happened."

"I have a job to do, several now actually, that require my being with the Dark Lord. I couldn't very well do that if I was still associated with the Order."

"So, why associate yourself now?"

"The Dark Lord has requested it."

"And you think at his request, they'll let you back in?!" Remus asked incredulously.

"No, I think it best that no one know of this except for you. It will be better if I talk to none but yourself, for the time being. It will be up to

you to inform the others of my involvement and explain the situation. When they've come to terms with it, then I have an exchange."

"An exchange?"

"Yes, when the time comes, you can tell them that as proof of my loyalty to them, that I rescued Ginny Weasley and brought her back. That should endear them slightly, don't you agree?"

"You'd have to actually have her," he said, then after a moments pause, added, "Ginny and Hermione or nothing at all!" he spat.

"Ah, yes. Granger did say you two had a connection to each other."

Remus' face softened immediately and he asked, like a man dying from thirst, "is she ok? Can you tell me where she is? Can you save her as well?"

"Touching," he sneered, unable to resist tormenting the man in front of him.

"You're lying," Remus said, his expression suddenly hard again. "You don't even know where she is."

"She told me an interesting tale, seemed to think you would need convincing that I am indeed on your side. I shall spare you the disgusting details, but needless to say, I know about Ron and Black's little cousin. Quite disturbing in my opinion, but nevertheless."

"She told you that?"

"Yes. Granger is, at the moment, making the best of her situation. She has also, as usual for her, gotten herself in rather deeper than needed and has decided to do something from the inside to help with the war."

"My gods, it's her, isn't it?" he asked in shock. "I always suspected, always feared it was her since Harry started having the dreams, but I just hoped..."

“He has shown Potter? Fabulous,” he said sarcastically. “I can only assume that it is his way of making Potter feel, not only betrayed, but as though he’s betrayed her as well. And as weak as Potter is, I’m sure it will work.”

“Unfortunately, I’m afraid you’re right. But he said this girl actually, um, enjoys herself.”

“Granger has absorbed a dark magical power from a book she had no business reading. Long story short, this power allows her to handle things of this nature. It’s this new ability that has her ready to take on the war single-handed.”

“And you’re helping her? I thought you hated her.”

“Things change, Lupin. I’ve been rather impressed by her actually, and I’m not the only one. The Dark Lord has become rather obsessed with her as has Lucius. If I had to guess, I’d say Lucius was actually falling for the girl. He’ll help protect her as well.”

“Lucius Malfoy? You’ve got to be kidding.”

“No, but does it surprise you that much to know that she could change a man’s views?”

“Not really, no, but are his views actually changing? Are you saying he may switch sides as well?”

“Not yet, but we’re working on that. His loyalty is wavering at the moment. You must talk to the Order and explain the situation. I would prefer Granger be left out of it. When Miss Weasley is returned, she should be sleeping for several days. I have no doubt that when she wakes up, she will be spouting all kinds of nonsense and it would be best that they are allowed to believe it.”

“I think I understand. Contact me soon and I’ll see what I can set up,” he said, rising from his seat to take his leave.

“Do be quick, Lupin, I am on a deadline.”

Remus nodded his head in answer and walked out of the door before apparating home. He wasn't sure why he believed Severus so easily, probably because of Hermione if truth be told, but he was sure that the others would not. He also wasn't sure why he didn't tell the man about what they had just learned about the name. Keeping that bit of information to himself, along with what Severus said about Hermione and Voldemort, Remus walked quickly into the house and up to his room. He'd arrange his thoughts, along with a meeting, and discuss what was going to be done to at least bring Ginny back to Harry.



Hermione dried herself off diligently. The amazing bathtub in the center of the room was one of her favorite things, which was rather sad when she thought that this was what her life had been reduced to. Instead of wallowing in her self-pity, she squared her shoulders, plucked up her Gryffindor courage, and had made the best of her life. She kept telling herself that soon she'd see her friends, hell, even seeing Ron would be great. Ginny, pathetic though she may be, would be going back to Grimmauld Place soon. At least someone was going back to Harry. Harry, by the gods she missed him. She refused to think about their strained friendship toward the end, only allowing herself the good memories so that she could get through each day. Gods, what had become of her? A slave to Death Eaters, Voldemort's personal whore? She shook her head and laughed at the irony. Gryffindor know-it-all turned Slytherin lover? Where was the justice in the world?

However, there were shining lights in her otherwise dark world. Lucius being the main one. If she were to be completely honest with herself, she would admit that she was slowly falling for the Malfoy patriarch. She was slowly falling for Draco Malfoy's father! But she didn't allow herself that bit of honesty, instead, tamping down the feelings and refusing to dwell on them. Too much had happened, she told herself, to ever fall for a man like him. She could love to be with him, without loving him...it was possible.

Severus was also a bright spot for her. He was one of the few she was 'allowed' to speak to and she was coming to thoroughly enjoy their time together. It was a bit obvious at first that he wanted her physically, but as their relationship grew, along with the bond they shared, he had taken on the roll of big brother. Telling her what he thought whether she wanted to hear it or not, watching out for her no matter how grudgingly, and talking to her like she mattered to him. She had come to realize that no one she knew really understood him and he often used his bad reputation to keep people at arms length; more for their own safety than any strange reluctance for human interaction.

The most shocking, and downright scary, thing in her world at the moment, was how much she enjoyed her time with Tom. That's who he had become to her, Tom Riddle; Slytherin Head Boy, top of his

class, handsome, powerful, intelligent, and as skilled with a wand as he was as a lover. She knew, somewhere in the dark recesses of her mind, that Tom and Voldemort were one in the same, but she had begun unconsciously separating the two. Voldemort was the enemy, Tom was the lover. And Harry would hate her either way. Remus would understand, she was sure. He'd be disappointed when he found out, but she was sure that he'd understand and he'd support her. She told herself it was acceptable, that she could feel things for Tom because she'd never feel those things for Voldemort.

With her thoughts settled in her mind, she finished drying herself off and wrapped her voluminous hair in a towel. Lucius had brought her actual clothing in the last few days and so had Severus. Some were outfits of muggle acquisition and others were regular witch's robes. Nothing fancy, but all were much better than wearing regular bathrobes. She donned a pair of jeans and pulled on a tank top, amazed once again at their ability to pick her size without her being there, but silently wondering if it were magically done.

"Hermione, are you here?" came the silky, draw of Lucius.

"In here, love," she called back, walking out into the room and barely registering that she had began calling him the same thing she herself loved being called.

He walked over to her, arms laden with packages, and gently kissed her forehead. "You smell good," he complimented.

Smiling up at him, she said, "are those for me?"

"Possibly," he teased, "or they could be for my other slave. The one who doesn't talk back to me and behaves herself properly."

"Yes, and you would hate her for it, would you not? If, in fact, you had a slave like that, you'd be deprived of all the luxuries that I give you. And stop calling me a slave, I don't like it."

"You don't? So, I can no longer call you a Mudblood, nor can I call you a slave. What, if I may be so bold to ask, am I allowed to call

you?" he continued, sitting down his packages and removing his cloak.

She watched his deliberate actions, loving his teasing manner and praying it would last. Sometimes he could be so kind and gentle, but then change for no apparent reason, other than Severus' belief of jealousy, into a cold, unfeeling bastard. She soaked up the moments like this one and refused to believe that, if circumstances were different, two people such as themselves would never have gotten this time together.

"You can call me all sorts of things. I like 'gorgeous', 'angel', 'princess', 'perfect', 'wonderful', and a favorite of mine is 'Hermione'.

He laughed at her remark and walked back to her, cupping her cheek gently in his gloved hand as he stared into her eyes. "You are all of those things and more, Hermione. But most importantly, you are mine."

"Your's," she whispered as he lowered his mouth to hers and kissed her longingly.

Breaking the kiss with a growl, he added, "I have also learned that it is best not to start lustful thoughts with you that cannot be finished. I came by to bring you a few more things, including your dress, before I must leave again."

"Oh, Lucius, you've given me so much already! Wait, did you say leave? Again?"

He grinned at her and replied, "I take care of what is mine, and I want you happy. And yes, I have a short mission to attend to this evening. Then tomorrow we have a dance to attend."

"Be careful, Lucius. I'll miss you."

"I won't be gone long, pet. I'll pick you up tomorrow at seven sharp. Be ready and be beautiful."

She grinned up at him, her head barely reaching his chin, and said excitedly, "my dress, my love. I want to see it!"

The look that flashed across his face was unreadable and he quickly turned around before she could begin to decipher it. Maybe, just maybe, he felt more for her than he was willing to admit, after all.

Handing her a large box, he propped himself up against the table and watched as she eagerly tore into the wrappings.

"You have such amazing taste, Lucius, I'm always so excited to see what you pick out for me. I don't know how you do...Oh my gods, Lucius! It's perfect!" she squealed, pulling the dress from the box and clutching it to her chest as she spun around.

"This is a dance first and foremost. I usually tend to skip the other parties unless my presence is required. The dances however, we in the high society, actually prefer to attend. Everyone dons their best, brings their wives, and puts on airs."

"Their wives? So then, why are you taking me?" she pouted.

"Because you, my dear, will be far more fun than my wife, who will be busy with her own boy toy, I believe."

"I see. Thank you again, Lucius, I love it!"

"I aim to please, I suppose," he said, teasing her once more. "I will see you at seven. As beautiful as you usually are, I can't wait to see what you will do to yourself in preparation."

"I'll make you proud." She leaned up and whispered huskily into his ear, "I'll make you crazy with lust the entire time until you're dying to lose control and ravage me senseless."

He groaned low in his throat and held her at arms length, watching as she held the gown up to her body and examined it once more. A beautiful mauve color, the dress boasted a sensible, but sexy neckline and a flowing skirt. A perfect choice for dancing and he was

already itching to throw her on the bed and take her body in unimaginable ways right then and there.

“You accomplish that by merely breathing,” he replied, his own voice raspy. “I put quite a lot of thought into your dress and looked several places to find the one I liked the most.” He looked at her sheepishly and she swore she felt her heart stop for a fraction of a beat at the look on her face. “I also made sure to not get green, or any shade remotely close.”

“It’s perfect, Lucius! Thank you so much!”

She ignored the footsteps by the door and tried to ignore the voice in her head. “Granger, please tell me you both have clothes on. Lucius and I need to be leaving now and we can’t make the snakey bastard wait any longer.”

She giggled, making Lucius look warily at her, as the door creaked open and she smiled at Severus.

“Lucius, it’s time to go. Tell your witch goodbye and let us go meet the others,” he said, sparing a slight smirk in Hermione’s direction. She stuck her tongue out at him and his lips actually turned up slightly. “Mature, Granger. Really mature.”

Lucius laughed and kissed her once more. “Seven o’clock. Do be ready so I don’t have to wait.”

“I don’t believe I’ve ever made you wait,” she replied cheekily. “But I could if you want me to be more like a normal witch.”

“There is nothing normal about you and I’d like to keep it that way. Your constant desire to push all boundaries keeps me on my toes,” he said, pulling her body flush with his when he cupped her ass and squeezed firmly, “and keeps you in my bed.”

“You’re such a whore, Lucius,” she giggled. “Be careful,” she said, looking past Lucius at Severus before adding, “both of you.”

She refrained from the girlish squeal that threatened to leave her lips when she watched the two leave the room. Opting for the more mature option, she sat on the table and began to read the new books that they had brought for her.

“Ah, my friend, if I didn’t know better, I’d think you were in love for the first time. It’s quite nauseating watching the two of you together.”

“Do shut up Severus. My attraction to the young witch has little to do with love and more to do with her body. She has a sharp mind as well.”

“Whatever you have to tell yourself to get by but you have been unable to lie to me as of yet,” Severus said quietly before they joined the others and donned their Death Eater robes.

Lucius sighed wearily. “No, I never could lie to you, could I?”

“Remus, there’s an owl on the couch for you and it won’t let me touch it,” Bill called to the older man, unintentionally waking Mrs. Black and sending the others scurrying to cover her up again.

Remus looked curiously at the strange owl and took the parchment from its’ leg. Opening it, he read quickly and his face turned white.

“Get the others together quickly!” he said to Bill.

“What’s going on?”

“Just do it! NOW!” he shouted.

It was too late to wish he had called the Order meeting last night instead of today, but thanked the heavens they were all there now. The meeting would have to wait, this letter was much more important.

As they all gathered in the Drawing Room while Remus told them of their new mission and they all rushed out in a flurry of wands and robes.

“Not you, boy,” said Moody’s gruff voice. “You stay put and we’ll fill you in when we get back.”

Harry stammered a reply, but with an apologetic look from Remus, he threw himself down on the couch angrily and waited.

His wait wasn’t a long one. Two hours later a very rumpled collage of Order members flooded back inside the house and moved to the kitchen with Harry following closely behind.

“That was luck!” Tonks said as she brushed the ash from her robes as she slowly moved closer to Ron.

“Luck nothing. Who was the letter from, Remus?” Bill asked curiously, shooting an angry glare towards his youngest brother.

They all gave Remus varying looks and he took a deep breath before beginning. “I had a meeting yesterday with someone who wants to help us.”

He paused briefly as they all gasped in surprise. Only Harry seemed to understand where this was going. “Who?” he demanded.

Ignoring the young wizard before him, he continued, “this man said that he had work to do on his own for the time being, but in exchange for allowing him into the Order he was willing to give us something...someone you all want.”

“Sounds like something a sodding Death Eater would say,” Charlie grumbled.

“Sounds like something Snape would say,” Harry said forcefully, glaring in Remus’ direction as the others snapped to attention once more.

“It is,” Remus said quietly, anticipating their reaction and almost smiling when the outraged group did not disappoint him.

“Bloody Hell!”

“Absolutely not!”

“Remus, how could you consider such a thing!”

“He killed Dumbledore!” Harry screamed at the werewolf.

Remus rubbed the bridge of his nose and held a hand up to stop the tirade. “I have discussed things with Severus and it is for me, and me only, to understand. It is not up to you to know all the details,” he said forcefully. “When I was voted as head of the Order, it was with the understanding that I would make the best possible decisions. Trust that I know what is going on and let us leave it at that.”

Harry huffed and crossed his arms, the others stiffened at his words. Remus was in charge of the Order, but commanded in a very low-key and quiet way. Never once had he told them to do something solely on the grounds of ‘because I said so’ and no one really understood how to take it.

“Why come out now? Why wait so long to talk to someone?”

“He waited until the time was right and that’s all I’m saying.”

“In ex...exchange for who?” Molly stuttered.

Remus looked directly at Harry and said softly, “Ginny.”

The outcry of relief and anger was deafening.

Again, Remus held his hand up for silence. “He only just found a way to rescue her and she’ll be returned no matter what we do. However, I feel it’s in our best interest that we allow him to rejoin. Perhaps not completely and not with our full trust, but it is needed.” He registered the fact, somewhere in the back of his mind where he could refuse to acknowledge it fully, that no one said a word or asked anything about Hermione and he hated them for it. Hated that they had pushed her away, caused her capture, and hated that they were the cause of what she was going through now.

“Was he the one that warned you of tonight, then?”



“Yes.”

Suddenly there was a loud banging outside the front door and they all ran upstairs. Moody and Kingsley moved to cover the portrait once again, while the others went to the door. Remus flung the door open immediately and pulled the wizard inside.

“I need somewhere to lay her down,” Severus, bruised and bloody, said coldly.

Most were too shocked to move, to even speak, but Molly took one look at her baby girl’s limp form and said, “follow me, Severus, and thank you.”

Hermione was certain it was almost time. Surely the barely setting sun registered the time to be near seven. She waited nervously for Lucius to enter and when he did, she gasped in surprise. He was devastatingly handsome and her breath caught in her throat.

“Lucius, you look...wow! You look amazing!” she said, walking over and kissing him gently on the lips.

Reluctantly he said, “so do you, love.”

“I’m so very sorry about the dress, Lucius. You know I didn’t have a choice, right? You know how much I love the one you bought me.”

He relaxed slightly and gave her a small smile. Anger had ripped through him when he had gone to visit Hermione after his failed mission and learned that the Dark Lord himself had supplied her with a dress and required her to wear it. The dress was tasteful, but green, and he could see in her shimmering eyes, hear the honesty in her voice, when she told him she wanted to wear his, but had no choice. What had he really expected? The lingering suspicion that his increase in missions was due to the Dark Lord’s desire for Lucius’ very own witch were slowly becoming confirmed. It would appear that there were two dark, powerful wizards falling for the mudblood, and that thought galled him to no end. Hermione was his, plain and simple. His to hold, his to make love to, his to provide for, and his to deny

what he felt for. It was not for someone else to do those things, but there was only one who could, and it appeared that he was.

He tucked her arm in his and walked down the steps and into the ballroom. Hermione gasped as her eyes took in the vast room and all of its' splendor.

"Amazing," she breathed.

"A beautiful room for a beautiful witch," Lucius said, walking proudly with her to a far table and pulling out her chair as the others watched.

"A chair?" she asked quietly.

"I have orders to treat you as a date for the night. As much as it might pain me to do so," he teased, "I get to drop the slave act and treat you as though it was your choice to be here with me."

The tone in his voice wasn't lost on her and she leaned over to whisper in his ear. "Perhaps, Lucius, when all of this is over, we can have a real date. You can court me formally and I can wear my beautiful gown," she said, both forgetting that he was already married and there was no chance of that happening in their future.

"Perhaps," he responded rather coldly.

There was a bit of small talk while the others arrived and a meal was served. She noticed that there were no other slaves in attendance and even Narcissa and Voldemort seemed to be missing. Deciding not to dwell on that issue, she acted the part of proper lady and tried to make Lucius proud. A few unknown people were sharing their table, but none seemed to know who she truly was. They made civil conversation with her, especially the other women, and she was surprised to find herself actually enjoying the evening.

Their dishes disappeared an hour later and the music began. She wasn't sure what she had been expecting, but it appeared that ballroom dancing was the main attraction and she was rather pleased.

Lucius stood and asked for a dance, which she readily agreed to. As they slowly and perfectly moved around the dance floor, she couldn't help but to stare in his eyes and get lost in the movement of their bodies.

"You make a superb dancer," he complimented.

"Why, thank you. You're pretty good yourself. Where is Severus tonight?"

"There are many things Severus does not do. Dancing is at the top of that list. He said he had some business to get in order and I think we both know exactly what he meant."

"I was wondering when that would happen. Um, Lucius," she said nervously and he noticed when he spun her around, exactly what it was that caught her attention.

Narcissa stood in the doorway glaring at them both. Others had taken notice, but few seemed to be bothered by the affair on any other level than appreciating the beauty of the woman with Lucius. As the dance ended and they headed back to their table, Hermione became increasingly worried about the scene she was sure was about to unfold. Neither noticed the man in the shadows glaring equally as hard at Narcissa herself when Rebastian started walking towards the blonde beauty, but quickly veered in Hermione's direction.

Before the scorned wife made it to the couple however, he had walked over to them. "Lucius, if I may?" he asked demurely as he offered his hand out to Hermione.

She looked up at him and he slowly nodded his head. "One wrong move, Rebastian, and it's your ass," he growled warningly.

"Of course," he answered with a grin as he led Hermione back out onto the dance floor.

Lucius watched as the man lazily led her in the dance. He seemed far more concerned about where he could put his hands and get away with it, then the actual dance itself. It didn't take long for the dark

haired man to take more than a few too many liberties and Lucius could feel his blood boiling.

“Mr. Lestrangle, I hardly feel that is appropriate,” she said when she moved his hand once again and felt his grip increase on her waist at her protest.

They danced around another couple and he lowered his mouth to her ear. “I’m not sure why you’re here tonight, Mudblood, but we both know who and what you are. Don’t pretend to be what you’re not. I want your hot, naked body under me and I think I’ll have it before the night is through.”

Lucius watched as Hermione’s look turned from irritation to anger. Whatever the man was saying, it wasn’t pleasant. He heard a wave of whispering go through the crowded room and turned when Rodolphus tapped him on the shoulder.

“So, is it true then? You brought your slave as a date? How did you convince our Master to allow such a thing?” he asked, his eyes lingering on Hermione more to anger Lucius than anything.

Before he could answer, Hermione’s shriek caught his attention and he started storming to the dance floor with his wand drawn. He stopped dead when the object of his anger went skidding across the floor and Hermione covered her mouth with both hands, still visibly shaking.

Death Eaters started bowing down, but Lucius was too focused on Hermione to take notice. He quickly wrapped his arms around her, still watching Rebastian’s terrified gaze. “Hermione, what happened? Are you alright?”

She pulled his robes down with her as she went on one knee. “Thank you, Milord.” Lucius, finally catching on, repeated the gesture before they both rose before him.

He nodded his head once, his eyes blazing a trail along Hermione’s body and not missing that she had yet to look at his face. “The dress does you justice, does it not?”

“Yes, Milord. Thank you for the gift.”

“And you, Lucius, do you like my gift to her?”

“Of course, Milord,” he responded, trying desperately to keep the anger from his voice.

“Let it be known, my faithful followers,” Voldemort said loudly to the gathered crowd, but looking directly at the Lestrage brothers, “that she is here at my request and will be treated as such. Any misguided thoughts you may have had are strictly forbidden and a slight to her will be considered a slight to Lucius himself and dealt with as such.”

The entirety of the room stared in shock at the proclamation from their Master. Surely this wasn't the one that had been taking up his 'personal' time! A mudblood whore that belonged to Lucius was given protection by the Dark Lord himself? Their stunned expressions only cemented on their faces when he held his hand out to the girl and she readily took it.

“Dance with me,” he said evenly, smirking when Lucius walked gracefully from the dance floor.

He held her in the proper manner as they twirled around the floor in perfect unison. “I cannot change my appearance for you here,” he said so softly that she shivered from his words, “but I would appreciate if you would actually look at me,” he added coldly.

She flinched inwardly before lifting her gaze to meet his. Pasting on her most innocent face, she said demurely, “I wasn't sure if I was allowed the right, Milord.”

The prickling in her mind increased and she quickly blocked him out, showing instead a picture of their time in bed together and, inadvertently, showing herself shuddering at the sight of Nagini.

“You dance wonderfully,” she complimented as he sent her in a rather complicated series of turns and spins.

“Yes, it was a requirement for all the Slytherins when I was at Hogwarts. I believe, however, that the practice has fallen like so many others.”

She grinned up at him with sincere affection, “it would have been hard for you to attend the balls with all of the lovely witches if you could not dance.”

“Quite difficult indeed. I must say that not a single witch in my time at Hogwarts could have compared to the one I dance with now. Only the school itself shown with such promise.”

“Such a generous compliment, Milord. I am deeply flattered.”

“Look around, tim molisje, do you see the lovely pureblood couples dancing and laughing? Even Lucius is dancing with his wife. This is as it should be and when the war is won, when I’m in control of the world in its entirety, this is only a taste of what can be expected.”

“And what of me, Milord?”

“Mmm,” he said thoughtfully, noticing the jealousy that flickered in her eyes when they rested on Lucius dancing with Narcissa, “there will be a special place for you, I believe. You will be tucked away here safely until the end. Then we shall go from there. I have no desire to destroy the mudbloods, only to control them. They are magical and I would never waste a magical being.”

“I understand, Milord. Thank you for securing my safety.”

“I have decided to allow you certain privileges,” he said vaguely as he walked her off the dance floor. “We will discuss those at a later time. For now, I must spread myself out among the other willing witches.”

“Do enjoy your time, Milord,” she said grinning. “I look forward to our meeting.”

Lucius took her arm from Voldemort with a slight bow of his head, and slowly led her back to the table. “You have become quite the talk of the evening,” he said evenly.

Picking up on his tone and the impending mood, she asked sweetly, "when can we leave, Lucius?"

"Are you not taking pleasure in the festivities?"

"I suppose, but there are other pleasures I desire more."

He spared her a wink before his eyes widened as he glanced back to the dancing couples. "It would appear that my wife has chosen to make her affair rather known. Surely Draco will be furious."

"And you are not?"

"No. I have told you about the relationship I share with my wife. Though it is not the one I wish to have with a wife, it is the one Narcissa and I have. That is all there is for now, all there can be. Are you ready to dance once more, love? Then, perhaps, we can retire for the evening."

"Of course," she agreed, smiling up at him as he led her to the center of the floor and pulled her in close. The music was slow, the lights were turned down, and as they danced, they both forgot there were others in the room. Their movements were slow and their hands strayed to places that strongly tested the boundaries of propriety.

As Voldemort watched the dancing couple from his chair above the others, he felt the most peculiar feelings pass through his chest as it constricted tightly. She looked at Lucius as she looked at him sometimes; when they were unguarded in their thoughts and alone. The little witch made him say and think things that were more than just a little unbecoming of a man in his position. What made him, for example, protect her the way he did? What made him lash out at a faithful servant when he saw her angry face and noticed the hands encasing her breasts? He watched with uncertainty as the music ended and the two exited the room. He saw how Lucius' own wife glared at the back of another man, one that wasn't her husband, and wondered if he was correct in his assumptions that love was highly overrated. The realization flew through his body like liquid ice and he knew. He knew what was wrong with him, with the situation, and he

couldn't remember a time when he had felt so angry, so completely and totally enraged and so completely weak and vulnerable. Not even when he learned that Lucius had sent his diary, his horcrux, into the waiting hands of Harry bloody Potter was he this angry. Sitting back in his chair and touching his fingertips together before him, he contemplated his choices. Finally, he came to a conclusion. It wasn't a very Slytherin one, but it was a decision nonetheless. He decided to simply wait. He would wait and see what happened. Wait and see if the little witch dug herself a hole that she was unable to find her way out of. And he would enjoy taking pleasure in her body, and in her mind, until she sunk so deep that she drowned in her own treachery.



Trying desperately to hide her excitement, Hermione followed Lucius back to her rooms. It was obvious that he was going to be staying with her again tonight and she was just as happy this time as she was the first. Perhaps it was because her heart wasn't quite as cold and hardened as she liked to tell herself it had become, but the mere thought of being held in his arms, of waking up with his warm body pressed against hers, sent delicious shivers cascading down her spine as she hummed in anticipation.

"You're bouncing," Lucius drawled as they walked up the stairs and to her room.

She chuckled softly and said, "I'm rather happy to be out of there."

"Is it just my rescue that has made you so happy?" he asked teasingly.

Hermione stopped, allowing him time to stop beside her before she grabbed his robes and pushed him into the wall. His eyes opened wide with shock, but before the anger could register as well, she kissed him fiercely and he found himself returning the kiss with equal passion. His hands snaked around her body as he pulled her flush to him. Their tongues fought for dominance in his mouth and the evidence of his approval pushed against her stomach, making her moan in pleasure.

He slowly broke the kiss and they both stood together, panting for breath. "I have never..." he said, still dazed by both her boldness and his all-consuming reaction to her.

She grinned up at him and replied, "that's what I'm here for, love. To make sure you do all the things that 'you've never' and to be the one to help you experience them."

"There are times that I wonder if you're not more trouble than you're worth, cheeky little witch," he smiled down at her, raising his gloved hand and gently stroking her cheek.

"So, are we going to continue to waste time out here in the hall, or are we going to go to my room?"

He growled playfully at her before pushing her quickly into her room and closely the door behind him. He withdrew his wand from his cane and pointed it at the door. "I do not wish for another interruption," he explained.

The jewelry she had been wearing slowly came off in her excited hands as she watched Lucius place his cane against the wall and hang his cloak, careful to avoid wrinkles as he kept things nice and orderly. His gloves came off next, one finger at a time and she found herself enthralled by that simple act. When he looked up at her and caught her staring, he simply smiled; a predatory gaze in his eyes as he watched the young witch appraise his body.

"You looked amazing tonight," she said, her hungry eyes now back on his face.

"And you, my dear, look absolutely ravishing. Come here," he ordered gently and watched as she walked towards him with a smile. He loved that she was no longer shy, but ready and willing for him at any time. He had watched her blossom in her sexuality and wondered only briefly what moron had had her before him. Surely one could not possess such a treasure only to allow it to leave, or worse, cause it to leave.

When she was standing before him, she raised her hand and gently caressed his cheek. "Will you not be missed at home tonight?"

"I hardly think my wife will be looking for me tonight, not with her lover so close by."

"Rabastan? I just don't understand the attraction," she mused.

Chuckling at her comment, he took her hand in his and pulled her up against him. "I hate the dress," he murmured before capturing her lips with his own. As they kissed and their hands begin to roam, her dress loosened before falling at her feet.

He gently pushed her away to see her golden body clad only in a pair of red knickers. "Are those from him as well?" he asked menacingly.

Her grin slowly crossed her face and she asked, "Jealous, love?" Upon the anger flashing through his eyes, she quickly added, "no, they were from you, if you remember. I wanted to have a bit of something from you to wear tonight."

"Did you now? And the jewelry was not enough? Do you require even more from me, Pet, even more than what you've been so graciously given?"

"Lucius," she warned, "don't start. I never asked you for anything, not once, and you bloody well know it. I wanted to wear the dress you bought for me tonight, but I couldn't, so don't be angry with me. Put the blame where it goes and then continue to seduce me like the man I know you to be, and not the angry and cold man you pretend you are."

Lucius stood shocked at her words. Calculating them in his head, but coming up short each time. "You really don't want more from me?" he asked and she shook her head. He smirked down at her, his fingers drawing lazy circles on her arms and responded, "I am an angry and cold man. Maybe not always, maybe not to you, but that is the man I've become, the man that I am."

"No, Lucius," she said softly, stroking his cheek once more, "that is the Death Eater speaking and not the man. I love how you are with me when you're happy and that is the man I want."

A puzzled look crossed his face as he continued to gaze down at his witch. "No one has ever talked to me the way you do. Not the words, nor the intent, and I find myself confused as to how to take it. I find myself confused by you."

Now the shock was Hermione's. She wasn't sure exactly what he was saying, only that she liked the words and the honest sincerity behind them. Reaching up on her toes and pressing her body against his, she kissed him. It wasn't a hungry kiss full of lust and need, but a kiss full of compassion and understanding, and it was returned as such.

He lifted her small form up and she wrapped her legs around his waist. His hands felt like warm silk against her bare back as he stroked her softly and kneaded her skin. She could feel his hands slide down to her ass, cupping her gently as he lay her on the bed and stood back up. When she looked at him, he was removing his clothes and placing them on the chair.

There was something about this man naked that sent her blood boiling and her heart racing. His broad shoulders and chiseled chest were amazing, along with the long arms she loved to have wrapped around her. As her gaze traveled down his body, she could see the taper of his waist and his gorgeous manhood, already erect and ready for her attention.

He walked over to her and slowly skimmed his hands along her body. "You're so soft," he murmured silkily, "like silk."

As his hands continued to travel her body, shivers followed and he smiled down at her. "Do you want me, witch?" he asked heatedly.

"Yes," she mumbled, biting her lower lip and watching the hands that began cupping her breasts. Her legs wrapped around his waist as he moved between her parted thighs and he groaned softly when his cock grazed her wet pussy.

"Take me, Lucius," she said, pulling him closer to her.

He bent over slightly, his fingers still teasing her nipples as he growled, "I believe, my witch, that I have allowed you entirely too much leeway. You are to learn that I am in control and not you."

A smirk from the muggleborn was his only answer and he sneered down at her. His strong hands grabbed her thighs roughly and pulled them further apart as he slid his long, thick cock inside her waiting heat in one fluid motion. She gasped and wiggled beneath him, but he kept his hands on her hips, not allowing her to move as he thrust roughly inside of her.

"Gods, Lucius! Yes!" she cried, her hands grabbing his wrists and digging into his skin.

“You like that witch? You like my cock slamming into you, don’t you? You dirty little whore!”

Another thrust coupled with those harsh words and she was gone. Her body wracked in convulsions as her muscles clamped on his cock tightly and he groaned as he rode her orgasm.

“Oh, Lucius!” she purred again while he continued to thrust inside of her.

“Want more, do you?” he asked, bending over and licking her nipple before sucking it roughly into his mouth.

“Yes, more Lucius, please!” she whimpered.

He thrust into her several more times before lightly biting her nipple and putting even more pressure on her hips as he drove harder and harder into her. “Yes, witch!” he screamed, only moments before her second orgasm took over and she screamed his name so hard her throat protested in pain.

“So good, so tight, make me come,” he panted in her ear as his seed spilled into her passage and a loud moan left his lips.

He collapsed on top of her, then slowly rolled over and pulled her closer to him. Both covered in a light sheen of sweat and breathing heavily.

“My gods, Lucius, that was incredible,” she said softly when she found her voice.

“Yes,” he chuckled, “and I believe everyone will know it.”

“Was I really that loud?” she asked horrified.

“I like you loud,” he responded after a brief kiss and they both drifted off to sleep for the night.

Hermione was awakened in the morning by several light kisses along her face and neck. Opening her eyes lazily, she saw Lucius above her, already dressed and smiling like a cat that caught the mouse.

"I must go now. There are things I need to attend to at the Manor and, after my failed mission, I daresay I should be quick before the Dark Lord begins looking for me."

"Hurry back, then?" she asked sleepily, but a slow, languid kiss was all she received before he strode to the door and left her room.

Suddenly she found herself being apparated and decided that it was definitely not conducive to waking up in a good mood. When she landed on the floor with a thud, she heard the unearthly screeching of the psychotic woman from before. Looking around, she knew that she was in Tom's chambers and that Bella was nearby. She gingerly struggled to her feet, trying to erase the drowsiness from her head as she stood and wished to educate herself in the art of snapping her fingers and making things appear. When she looked up, Voldemort was glaring down at her naked body.

"Busy this morning?" he sneered, throwing her the light blue robe from before. "Put that on and follow me."

She did as instructed and saw a very angry Bella standing from the table. "YOU STUPID BITCH! YOU FILTHY LITTLE WHORE!" she screamed as she stormed closer to Hermione.

"That is quite enough for now, Bella," Voldemort said calmly before turning to Hermione. "Do you have any explanation for your actions?" he asked coldly.

"I don't understand, Milord."

"Don't understand?! How could you not understand?!" Bella screeched again.

The darkness enveloped Hermione once more without being called and she welcomed it to her. Rolling her neck from side to side and becoming increasingly annoyed with the psychotic bitch before her,

Hermione said with a tone that eerily matched Voldemort's, "I do not understand, Bella, because up until a few moments ago, I was asleep. Therefore there have been no actions on my part and nothing I can think to explain."

"Think?! You're nothing but a filthy, mudblood slave! You're not allowed to think!"

Voldemort was standing to the side, knowing that Bella had every right to do what was about to be done, but feeling a bit torn about it himself. However, he couldn't help but be impressed with how the young witch handled herself in the face of danger. Most people who faced Bella died from fright before she even raised her wand, but this slip of a girl was discussing things with an air of coldness that impressed even him.

"No one can stop a person from thinking, Bella. I wouldn't expect you to understand such things as it would require you to think yourself, but thoughts cannot be stopped. Now, kindly explain what your issue with me is and let us go from there."

"Kindly explain?" she sneered. "My sister is dead because of you and you want me to 'kindly explain'?"

"Dead?" Hermione asked in obvious confusion.

"Yes, she's dead and it's all your fault!" Bella screamed before raising her wand.

Pain as she'd never felt before ripped through her body and she almost begged for death as she dropped to the ground and withered in pain. She could taste the blood in her mouth from her now lacerated lip; biting her lip in an effort to keep from screaming out. Through her own ear-splitting internal cries, she heard Bella's manic laughter. White-hot needles were burning through her skin and her bones. And thoughts of retribution were screaming through her blood. She looked at Voldemort with eyes full of pain.

"That's enough," he said calmly. "I have allowed this because it is deserved, but do not damage her beyond repair."

Hermione almost gave a sigh of relief. The pain had subsided and, although shaky, she could finally stand up and glare at Bella.

“And what,” she growled, “did I do to deserve that? I have never touched Narcissa. Nor would I want to.”

Bella looked rather pleased with herself as she walked around Hermione. “My sister,” she said angrily, “is dead because you are a whore. She loved her husband and you stole him from her. You, nothing but the filth that you are, took a pureblood from his wife. What form of trickery did you use?”

Again the deranged witch raised her wand, but this time Hermione went flying backwards into a wall. Crumpling in a heap and trying desperately to catch her breath, she looked up at Bella once more. Eyes blazing at the older witch, she suddenly found herself being raised from the floor and attached to the wall, arms and legs spread wide. It was all she could do at this point to not use her magic, but she knew her secret had to be kept.

“You will pay for every day you have been here, you pathetic excuse for a witch,” she snarled.

Hermione couldn't help herself, she laughed. A cold, heartless laugh fell from her lips disturbing not only Bella, but Voldemort as well. Her laughter subsided and she ground out, “I will pay? I have paid you stupid woman! It was not my decision to be here. I was taken without my consent and given away like a common animal! I have paid every day that I've been here and nothing, NOTHING, you can do could be any worse than having my own freewill striped from me.”

“You lay with our Master and you complain?” she sputtered out. “You spread your legs like a common whore for my brother-in-law and you complain?”

“I have never once complained about those acts I speak only about my lack of freedom. Who's to say, Bella,” she said with an air of indifference, “that I couldn't wipe the floor with your sorry arse? You, however, have me completely defenseless as you make remarks



about my supposed lack of worth. If that is how you wish it, then get on with your plans and, for Merlin's sake, shut up about it."

With the words said, the effect was instantaneous. Bella raised her wand once more, but instead of the first curse, Hermione felt her skin being ripped with each slash of the witch's wand. Gashes were forming along her body and pouring blood. She could feel herself weakening from the blood loss and pain, but she refused to scream out in protest. Voldemort watched from the corner as her tattered robe began falling from her body and her now cold eyes never left Bella's. Only when the weakness threatened to overtake her did her eyelids begin to droop and a foreign desire to stop the torture began to overwhelm him. He was saved from saying anything when the door was flung open from the outside and Severus and Lucius stormed in.

Severus immediately went to Hermione, undoing her bindings and cradling her in his arms as he spoke soothing words to her. Without a look in anyone's direction, he walked right out of the room with the frail, bleeding witch in his arms.

Lucius, however, went straight for Bella with murder in his eyes. He spared only a glance to make sure his witch was being cared for, before he rounded on Bella and began speaking, his cold, deep voice reverberating through the room.

"What, in the hell, do you think you're doing here? Who gave you the right to touch her? What reasons has your sick and twisted mind come up with to warrant such actions against her?"

"It's her fault, Lucius! Narcissa is dead, your own wife, and it's all her fault!"

Lucius' upper lip curled as he held a piece of parchment in front of him. "Perhaps, you stupid bitch, you should consider acquiring all of the facts before you act so rashly. It had nothing to do with Hermione at all. It had nothing even to do with me or our marriage. My wife killed herself last night because of your husband, Bella. Your husband is to blame for her death!"

"Wh...what are you talking about?" she stammered as her body began to shake slightly and Voldemort walked out from the shadows of the corner.

"Yes, Lucius, what are you talking about?" he asked, glaring at the pair.

"Milord, I apologize, I did not know you were here," Lucius said, bowing respectfully.

"Again, Lucius, what are you talking about?" his cold, calm voice now traced with anger and impatience.

"When I went to the Manor this morning, I saw for myself. I was appalled that Narcissa would even consider such a thing as suicide, Milord, something so completely beneath her pureblood standing, and I had to know why. I found this letter," he explained, holding up the piece of parchment once more, "which clearly states that her own sordid affairs led her to do such a thing as to cowardly take her own life." His angry gaze fell upon Bella once more.

"Everyone knows she was sleeping with Rabastan. What does that have to do with anything?" Bella asked, trying to get the parchment from Lucius.

Voldemort calmly summoned the letter to him and read it through. His eyes blazed with fury and the room around him began to silently tremble in his rage. Looking at Lucius and ignoring Bella he ordered, "Leave us. Consider her torture as part of your punishment for your own failures and leave us."

Swiftly leaving the room, Lucius never heard Bella's screams of pain. Voldemort, however, reveled in them. He dropped his wand as the witch lay trembling at his feet. "It would appear, my dear Bella, that your own husband was engaging in other acts with Narcissa Malfoy. I can attest to the fact myself, as she was wishing death upon the man just last night when he refused her request of a dance. So, why then, did you feel the need to point the blame elsewhere? To have someone else punished when there was no wrongdoing?"

“Master, I’m sorry. I didn’t know. Had I known about it...surely Cissy would have told me...my own husband...”

“Told you she was in love with your husband? That she killed herself because he wouldn’t leave you for her?”

“No, Master, it can’t be true!” she wailed.

“Stand up, Bella. Take the letter to your husband and sort out your personal affairs yourself. Do not include me in them again and DO NOT come to my bed again. I have had enough of this...of you. Consider yourself lucky to be alive and thankful that you did not receive worse. There may very well be a time when that witch seeks revenge and I will not stand in the way. NOW GO!”

Lucius had all but ran back to Hermione’s room. When he burst through the door, the sight that met him chilled him to the bones. His witch, his beautiful witch, was laying on the bed and moaning in pain. Severus was working diligently above her, whispering incantations over and over as her wounds began to heal.

Lucius strode quickly to the bed. “Is she okay?” he ask, his voice trembling slightly.

“I think she’ll live. I need to get some potions, I’ll be back,” Severus replied while he cursed himself for ever inventing the spell in the first place.

“Hermione, love,” Lucius said softly as he stroked the hair out of her face, “um, I need you to talk to me, okay? Tell me that you’re going to be alright. This never should have happened. It had absolutely nothing to do with you and Bella was wrong for attacking you. The Dark Lord should never have allowed such a thing. Please talk to me,” he pleaded.

“Bastard,” she said weakly.

Lucius lowered his head in what would appear to anyone else as a look of shame. “I know, Hermione.”

"It was not to you that she was referring, I'm afraid," Severus said softly as he strolled quietly to the bed.

"Then who?"

"Voldemort," she replied quietly once more, eyes still closed.

"Granger!" Severus said sharply in warning before realizing she was unconscious once more. He slowly pulled his wand and cast a silent spell before looking back at his friend.

Lucius was slowly easing away from the two, his eyes going back and forth between them in disbelief.

"Come now, Lucius," he said simply as he poured potions down Hermione's throat, "surely you remember who she was, who her best friends were. Although we'd all prefer she didn't use the name, she hasn't had a fear of it for a good many years."

"The name?" he asked dumbly. "No, Severus, I don't believe what I'm hearing. She goes willingly to his bed and you're telling me she hates him, and you knew?"

"She does what she has to do. I do fear that she's coming to feel for the man she knows as Tom Riddle, while hating the Dark Lord at the same time. However, if not for you, she would have allowed her insufferable tongue to have gotten her killed months ago."

"I don't understand. How could he have allowed her to suffer for things that were not her doing?"

"Ah, so you're finally coming around to seeing things clearly?" Severus asked cautiously, knowing that he had the opening he'd always wanted for his friend, but fearing that taking it too far at the moment was not a good idea. He discreetly waved his wand behind his back, casting a spell to keep from being overheard as he waited for his friends' reply.

"I have been seeing things differently for some time now, but I'm quite certain I don't know what you mean about clearly."

“He keeps you away so that he can have what is yours. He talks of muggle borns with disgust, but then finds himself enthralled with one so completely that it’s changing who he is. He has changed since we first joined him, Lucius, all those many years ago. The world he wishes to create will not be what we all once thought it would.”

“Are you saying what I think you’re saying, Severus? Are you actually entertaining ideas of treason? Have you been in Dumbledore’s pocket all these years, playing both sides against themselves? Have you?” he asked angrily.

“I have done what I needed to do to survive, Lucius. But I have done so by keeping my eyes open on both sides. Dumbledore was not the saint he was believed to be and the Dark Lord is not the ruler he is believed to be, either. Can you follow someone in good conscious that would hurt her in such a way?” he asked, looking back down at Hermione as she slowly began to stir from the potions.

“I don’t know what to say here,” he said honestly as he watched his witch and felt his heart doing strange things in his chest.

“If you tell anyone, if you reveal even a trace of what I have told you, he will kill all three of us.”

Lucius looked at them both again before slowly walking out of the door, only to wish a few moments later that he had stayed.

“Lucius, follow me,” the Dark Lord hissed.

“Yes, Master,” he said, still a bit dazed, but keeping his mind firmly closed as he followed the Dark Lord down the hall a short ways.

“How is your witch?”

“Severus believes she’ll recover, Milord,” he said, his voice strong now, but his eyes accusing.

“Crucio!”

Lucius fell to the ground in pain, his cries echoing off the walls as his master tortured him. Sweat was beading on his brow and he thought, in his pain-clouded mind, that the Dark Lord was finally going to kill him. His death would leave Hermione unprotected and that mattered more to him at that moment than anything; more than the Daily Prophet leaking the story about Narcissa, more than his son's accusations when he refused to hold a proper burial for his wife, and more than the knowledge that perhaps Severus was right after all. He struggled to live so he could protect his mudblood slave, his witch. Soon, however, the pain became unbearable and he passed out with the others watching on.

"Pity," Voldemort said quietly. "Leave him here to awaken," he added to his followers, "and let this be a lesson that I will not tolerate failure."

Back in her room, Hermione had regained consciousness and was slowly regaining her strength. "Did you hear that, Severus? It sounded like screams."

"I heard, Granger. I believe Lucius was receiving the rest of his punishment, your torture perhaps being the first part."

She looked at him with wide-eyes before shaking off his words. Standing quickly she said, "then we must go to him, we must take care of him."

Just as she was standing, the door slid open and Lucius fell into the room. "Hermione," he croaked, before passing out once more.

Severus levitated the man unto the bed and poured the remaining potions down his throat.

"It appears to only have been the Torture Curse. I think he'll be fine shortly. In the meantime, be careful what you say. He knows of our true allegiances, and he knows where they don't lie."

"He knows?" she asked worriedly.

"Yes, it didn't help that you called him a bastard while you were recovering."

“Oh gods, Severus, I am so sorry.”

“I think it will be alright. I suppose we will just have to wait and see. In the meantime, take care of him and get him ready for yet another mission tomorrow.”

“I will and thank you, Severus. I know there are times he hates me, but I will take care of him.”

“Hates you?”

“Yes,” she replied sadly, “there are times he’s happy with me and other times that he’s very angry. Half the time I don’t even know what I do that makes him so angry.”

“If it helps, Granger, I don’t think the anger is directed at you as much as at himself.”

With those words, Severus left Hermione alone with Lucius. She gently stroked his forehead and applied a cool rag as she waited on him to awake. He mumbled her name a few times, but for the next hour, that’s all she got.

“Hermione, love,” he mumbled after a time.

“I’m here, Lucius,” she cooed softly.

He began to stir a bit more and when he saw her awake and sitting over him, he very weakly raised his arms and pulled her down on top of him, holding her close as he drifted off once more. She snuggled into his embrace, hating herself as she silently thanked Narcissa for her death.

A/N: I must say that this chapter was really hard for me to write (for obvious reasons). Just stick with us (the characters and I) and see what unfolds. rape warning for later half of chapter Thank you all SO much for your reviews! They mean the world to me! And, if you want me to respond, please say so in your review and I'll be more than happy to do so!

As the Order began to rally around Grimmauld Place once again, Harry had even more trouble concentrating than before. Ginny had been returned almost a week ago and, although he was more relieved than anyone would ever know, something just wasn't right. He tried to tell himself that he was just giving her time and space, allowing her to heal from her horrific ordeal. He tried and failed to tell himself that he didn't see Voldemort with her every time he looked at his girlfriend.

He glanced across the table at her, watching as she slowly ate her food. She hadn't spoken a word since she woke up two days ago, and barely looked at anyone. It was as though she had become a robot, going through the motions, but without any feelings. Molly and her brothers had tried desperately to coddle the young girl and to make her open up about what happened. Harry knew that would never happen. Only Remus, Ginny, and he knew what Voldemort had done to her and none were willing to talk about it. The thoughts, however, had plagued him since her return, allowing sleep to elude him and the tiredness to creep in. He silently cursed his inability to sleep, wishing he could once more sink inside the stronger witch that lived in his fantasies.

"You alright, mate?" Ron asked, nudging him in the ribs and pointing to Harry's hand that was absentmindedly rubbing his forehead.

"What? Oh, yea, it's nothing," he answered, brushing off his friends' concern as he tried to listen to the conversation about the mission.

Snape had came by the night before and, after glaring at both Harry and Ron for a bit longer than usual, gave Remus several details about a few missions. The biggest one was to take place that night. Apparently the Death Eaters were attacking those that should have been on their side, but had declared themselves neutral instead. It



only occurred to him after Snape's departure that he hadn't asked about Hermione. He was too busy being furious with everyone else when they had told he couldn't go on the mission, but that Ron could, to think of anyone but himself. Now, he belatedly began to think about his other best friend.

After dinner, they were all preparing to leave when Harry slumped tiredly down on the stairs, waiting with irritation as they all bustled around him. He leaned his head against the wall and his dreams took him quickly.

There she was, the beautiful witch that plagued his dreams and filled his fantasies. He was running his hands along her naked back, pushing her long, brown hair to the side as he roughly caressed her skin and she moaned at his touch. Oh, how he wanted her. Every time he saw her naked and felt her raw magical energy combine with his, it consumed his very being until he found it impossible to control himself. Somewhere in the recesses of his mind, he knew the emotions were not all his, but it appeared that he had this in common with Voldemort and was almost thankful the evil wizard was sharing the experiences. He had long stopped caring that he didn't know who the witch was, his obsession had grown beyond that. Now he wanted to devour her himself and, as his hands drifted down the golden globes of her ass and around her hips to her wet folds, he vowed silently to himself to find the witch and make her his.

Unbridled anger suddenly swept through him and he roughly plowed into the naked girl before him. She was bent over the desk, hair now swaying with her body as he drove into her from behind. His strokes long, smooth, and demanding as the air crackled around them and he moaned in pleasure.

"You're my witch," he snarled as he thrust his hard cock hard into her with abandon.

"Say it witch, tell me who you belong to," he ordered angrily as she whimpered and moaned, almost coming undone from his words alone.

"You, Milord," she moaned.

His grip on her hips was bruising and he was pounding into her with renewed vigor. The feeling of release was so close Harry almost begged for it. Then he looked up, his reflection from the mirror in front of him glaring back as he rode the witch like a wanton slut. Gasping in surprise, he recognized the face of Tom Riddle and not the snake-like features of Lord Voldemort. Suddenly he grabbed the witch's hair, yanking it back forcefully as he pounded into her and she came undone.

"Fuck! Tom! YES!!" she screamed as her orgasm took over and she shuddered around him.

"That's it witch, give in to me," he said, slowly allowing her head to fall and face the mirror. "Give in to your master," he added as he thrust once more and came inside her wet heat.

"YES!" she screamed again, looking into their reflection, into his eyes.

Somewhere in the back of his horrified mind he heard a faint whisper, "I will win, Harry Potter. I have your witch. You have lost everything."

Harry jerked awake with a start, falling to the floor in realization as the sobs choked in his throat and he strained to breath.

"Harry! Harry! Are you alright?!"

Desperately trying to grasp what he'd just witnessed, while hating himself and the witch he once loved as a best friend, Harry turned his eyes up to Remus. Tears were pouring down his cheeks and the heartbreak was clearly written on every feature along his young face.

"It's her Remus," he said pitifully. "The one with Voldemort is Hermione." Another sob wracked his body and Remus gently wrapped his arms around the young man.

"I know, Harry, I know," he said softly.

"You...you knew?"

"Yes. I had my suspicions from the start. I knew there was a reason he was showing this to you and I assumed it must be Hermione. He's toying with you, Harry, and you can't let this get to you."

"How could she do this? How could she do this to me, to us?" he asked angrily.

"There is more to the story than we know, Harry," Remus said calmly.

"Remus, we must leave now!" a young girl, one of the few people that were genuinely concerned for Hermione's wellbeing, called from the doorway. Giving Harry an apologetic smile, Remus patted his back before standing to join the others.

"I'll be right there, Ophelia," he called back. "We'll be back soon, Harry, and then you and I will talk."

"Thanks, Remus," he sniffed, drying his tears and looking much too old, "I don't know what I'd do without you."

Pacing back and forth wasn't helping the situation any, she decided. Neither was constantly running her fingers through her untamed hair that Tom seemed to like so much or hiding her face in her hands. Hermione knew what Tom had done; knew the moment she heard the words that her best friend now hated her. She just didn't know how to handle the knowledge. Tom had snapped his fingers only moments ago and sent her back to her room.

Why did she have to agree with him? Why did she have to say she was his, knowing that Harry could be watching? That was actually quite simple, she thought as she paced back and forth again, logical thoughts escaped her when the man was shoving his cock inside her willing body. Emotions were whirling through her, enveloping her mind as well as her heart.

"Damn wizard," she muttered just as the door to her room opened and Lucius walked in.

"Hello, Lucius," she said distractedly.

"Hermione," came his short reply.

"Are you alright?" she asked, taking a bit more notice of him.

"I am fine," he said, an obvious lie.

"How did the mission go today? Did everyone make it out alright" she asked curiously, deciding to forget his moodiness once more in her quest for information.

"Is it us you care about?" he snarled, advancing on her as he sniffed the air around her, "or them?"

"Them?"

"Yes, your precious Order. Isn't that what you really concern yourself with?"

She bowed her head slightly. "Both really."

"You can't have both!"

"And why not?! Why can I have friends like Harry and Remus and have you ..."

"Your wolf?!" he snarled, grabbing her arms and shaking her roughly. "You care for that filthy half-breed, do you?"

"Of course I do! And don't call him that!"

He glanced down at her coldly a small smirk growing on his face. "Your wolf is dead, witch!" his voice was icy as he watched the tears spring to her eyes.

Tears immediately sprang to her eyes. "No, it can't be," she whimpered.

"Oh, it is. I killed him myself. I watched as the life fled from his eyes and he fell like so many others before him!"

“Y...you killed him?”

“Yes. While you were busy with the Dark Lord,” he said, sniffing their air around her in distaste once more. “It was, after all, part of the mission.”

“You killed him?” she asked again in obvious disbelief.

“That is what I said,” he snarled, shoving her away from him. “Now go bathe yourself! I refuse to fuck you smelling like another man.”

“How could you?” she cried. “I thought you were beginning to understand! I thought you cared!”

“Care? Like you care for the half-breed? Don’t attempt to know me, slave.” He angrily stormed out of the room, leaving a torn Hermione behind him.

Remus was dead. The kind, caring man that she had grown to love was gone forever and she felt her world slowly slipping away. On top of knowing that Harry now hated her, this was the final blow. She lost herself in the pain as she sobbed into her hands for what felt like hours.

Slowly, she began to control her emotions, the darkness shadowing her body like a protective blanket as her heart broke for the second time that day. She made her way to the bathroom, mechanically working the knobs and stripping her clothes. Tom had scoffed at her muggle attire at first, but as the conversation turned to her true thoughts of Dumbledore and his manipulations, Tom had to relent and agree that the way the blue jean material hugged her backside was very alluring. He then proceeded to tear the fabric from her body and completely ruin any lingering friendship she had with anyone from her past.

Sinking down into the tub, she dried her tears and bathed her body. Unaware of how long she had been there, she heard the door opening and two people walk in. Severus and Lucius.

“Where is Granger?”

“Drowning herself, I presume.”

“What?” he asked in confusion and anger.

“Oh, Severus, do calm down. I had an...altercation with her and let slip that I killed her wolf. She’s rather upset with me at the moment. Even more so when I told her to wash the Dark Lord’s scent off her body before I fucked her.”

“Why would you tell her that? You did realize what that would do to her, did you not?”

“Of course I did. I never meant to tell her, she just made me rather angry.”

“Granger?”

“Go away, Severus, I’m fine.”

“Perhaps, but...”

“Leave me alone!”

“Did you tell her about the prisoners as well?”

“No, I will tell her after I make the arrangements for Narcissa and we attend the meeting with the Dark Lord tomorrow. Ah, here’s the book. Shall we go, then?”

Hearing any sort of ‘comforting’ words from Severus was the last thing she wanted. He hated Remus as much as anyone and would have no idea how she was feeling at the moment. She breathed a sigh of relief when she heard them leave the room.

The next afternoon found Hermione feeling a bit nervous. She’d now had plenty of time to mull things over in her mind and wasn’t all that happy with what the end result came to be. Her personal heartbreak aside, the Order was now without its’ leader once again. She didn’t believe they could handle such disorganization this close to the end

and was sure Harry was in no state to deal with anything. It was also a bit ironic and petty that he had been kept from any missions. There were other losses, she knew. Severus had mentioned prisoners and she hoped that they weren't significant losses for the Order. Granted, any loss was bad, but the loss of those like Kingsley and Mad-Eye would be greater than that of the more novice members.

A sound near her door alerted her to a visitor. She turned toward the door and glared at the smirking form of Draco Malfoy.

"What do you want, ferret?"

"Come now, Mudblood, surely you're happy to see an old friend."

"I would be, if you were one, but you're not. Now, what do you want?"

"Answers, Mudblood. What you've always had in abundance since the day I met you. Do you remember," he asked, walking closer to her and trailing a finger across her cheek, "do you remember the first day we met?"

Moving from his touch she snapped, "answers to what?"

"My mother is dead, Granger, did you know that?" he asked coldly. His voice was even, dead, and haunting as he spoke to her. "So, tell me how it is that you, a Mudblood whore, have completely destroyed all that I held dear. There are even rumors that the Dark Lord has offered you protection himself. I don't believe that, personally, but you've definitely done something to my father."

"I haven't done anything to anyone, Malfoy. You know as well as I do that I didn't choose to be here. If you want to discuss rumors, perhaps you should think about the one that had your mother in love with another man. That is the reason she killed herself, not because of me."

"How dare you?!" he spat angrily, shoving her against the wall as he advanced on her. "You presume to think you know anything! You didn't know my mother, you whore. You took away the only thing I

had in this world and I,” he added coldly, “I am going to ruin you. My own father won’t want what’s left of you when I’m finished.”

Hermione gasped in shock as his hands moved roughly over her body before he slammed his own closer to her and the wall scratched at her back. With a quick wave of his wand, her hands were bound above her head and her clothes had vanished.

“Malfoy, STOP!” she yelled, trying desperately to kick or bite him as he lowered his trousers and revealed his growing erection.

“Listen at you, you filth, telling me what to do. I told you I was going to ruin you.”

One of his hands curled around her throat and she fought for her next breath. Her lungs began aching and burning from lack of oxygen and tears streamed down her face. She waved her fingers in his direction, trying desperately to undo her bindings or send him flying across the room. The tears flowed faster when she realized nothing she tried was working, not even the darkness was coming in her panicked state as she silently begged Severus to rescue her.

“Malfoy, you don’t want to do this. Your father will be angry!” she gasped with a rough voice.

“My father?” he snarled, kicking her legs apart and grabbing her breasts roughly with his free hand. “I don’t give a damn about my father. I don’t give a damn about anything anymore. Except punishing you for what you’ve done.’

With a manic glint in his eyes, he roughly thrust forward and sheathed himself completely in her dry passage, making her scream hoarsely from the pain. She could feel her head spinning from lack of air as his thrusts quickened and her insides felt as though they were on fire. Crying out when he bit down on her neck and screaming harder when the warm liquid flowed down her thighs.

“That’s it, bitch, I want you to bleed for me!” he growled menacingly, thrusting harder and harder as she tried desperately to scream and realized her voice was gone.



Suddenly, just when she thought she could take no more, the door flew open and Draco pulled out of her, turning quickly, but not before she saw the look of horror cross his pointed features.

His body went flying across the room and Hermione finally sagged with relief against her bindings as Severus hastily made his way towards her with a robe. As though she were detached, she felt her body being released and fell into his arms before he lay her gently on the bed and began cleaning and healing her.

"What were you told, young Malfoy, about touching the Mudblood slave?"

"I...I'm sorry, Master. I w...was angry and I...lost control," she heard him stammer.

"Lucius, will your family always be a disappointment to me? It is for you to torture him for his transgressions and I want to hear him scream before I have you kill him," Voldemort commanded evilly.

Draco's screams reverberated through the room as his father held him under the Torture Curse. After a solid minute, and no signs from Voldemort of allowing it to stop, Hermione shakily got to her feet, pushing Severus away gently as she wrapped the robe around her body.

"Milord," she said shakily, ignoring everyone in the room, but him as their eyes met and held.

"What?" he hissed.

"Please, pardon the interruption," she said over Draco's pitiful screams, "but I believe I should be allowed the right to punish and kill him. As you allowed Bella the right, so should the right be mine."

He looked at her for a moment, assessing her features and trying to enter her mind. "Enough, Lucius," he finally said. Turning back to Hermione he smirked and waved a hand towards the trembling figure of Draco, "as you wish."

"Milord, if I may, I haven't a wand or any magical energy at the moment. Would it be possible to recover first so that I may do this justice for you?"

"She speaks the truth, Milord. She was nearly strangled and is very weak. Perhaps Draco would find the dungeon cells to his liking in the meantime," Severus said smoothly as he glared daggers and the sniffing blood boy.

Voldemort snapped his fingers and Draco vanished from sight. "Completely heal her, Severus," he commanded before turning on Lucius. "You are not to push yourself on her until she is fully healed, do I make myself clear?" he asked coldly.

"Of course, Milord," Lucius answered quietly.

They all watched, each holding their breaths, as Voldemort walked out of the door and it closed quietly behind him. Hermione immediately slumped and was caught by Severus, who sat her down in the closest chair.

"I will get the potions and be back immediately," he said, quickly leaving the room.

"So," Lucius drawled, hatred etched in his voice and on his face, "you wish to kill my son now? Is it not enough that my wife is dead, must you take Draco from me as well?"

Staring in shock, Hermione tried to understand what she was hearing. "The Dark Lord told me that it wasn't my fault Narcissa killed herself, Lucius. Why would you stoop so low as to blame me?"

"He's my son, he's all I have," he said evenly.

She looked at the murderer before her and said coldly, "and I just saved his life. Did you want to continue cursing him?" she asked as Severus walked back in. "Did you want to kill him yourself?"

"Of course not! But I don't want you to do it either!" he shouted.

Severus raised his wand to the door and muttered a spell before handing the vials to Hermione. "Drink these quickly," he said before turning angrily towards Lucius. "She has just saved your son's life. The least you could do is show her respect, Lucius. Do not anger me over this," he snarled.

"How has she saved him when it is her that will kill him?" he asked shakily as his anger abated and he dropped into another chair.

"Draco has been sent to the dungeons. By the time she recovers, he will have suddenly disappeared. Am I right," he asked, turning back to Hermione, "in assuming that was your intention?"

"Yes," she spat, glaring at Lucius.

"How will he disappear? Where would he go? Nowhere will be safe for him!"

"Have you lost every sherd of intelligence you ever possessed? I will take him to the Order, where they will keep him until the war is over."

"What if the Dark Lord finds out? You'll be punished...killed?"

"Possibly, but that's only if the Dark Lord finds out."

"You would do that?" he asked quietly, looking at Hermione.

The anguish in his eyes tore through her already broken heart. "Yes."

"I'm sorry," he said with his head lowered into his hands, and had Hermione even dared to breath she wouldn't have heard him, "for everything."

Lucius then looked between them, a renewed sense of purpose in his features. "If you can truly do this, if you can save him, then I'll join you. Whatever it takes," he added as their eyes grew round and Hermione's jaw dropped, "I'll do it, just keep my son safe."

"I'll contact the Order immediately," Severus said, "but Lucius, I believe Hermione has earned the right to go with me this time."

"Is that even possible?"

"Yes, I can make it possible."

"No," he said firmly, Hermione's thrilled expression turning grim, "I won't allow her to disappear."

"Look here, you selfish bastard," she almost yelled, "I'll come back, I have no choice! If the Dark Lord finds me missing, he'll know everything and he'll kill Severus."

"You'll come back?! Do you think your friends will let you?"

"Yes," she said, slumping back down in her seat. "They'll probably jump at the chance."

"Then go, but if anything happens, it's on your head Severus."

"Will you make the Unbreakable Vow, my old friend?" Severus asked calmly.

Somewhat wearily, and with a considerable bit of thought, he said, "I'll make the Vow."

"Will you be the Bonder, Granger?" he asked, gazing on her still shocked expression as she nodded slightly.

"Um, won't she need a wand, Severus?"

"No. Now, take my right hand."

Lucius did as he was instructed. Right hands firmly grasped, Severus began speaking as Hermione lay her hand over theirs.

"Will you, Lucius, consent to do what is right by our standards to rid the world of the evil it has come to know, while allowing no one to learn of our secrets?"

Lucius gulped and responded, "I will."

A flame flew from Hermione's hand and wound its way around their joined hands, burning as it went.

"And will you consent to protect Hermione and those that belong to the Order of the Phoenix when possible?"

"I will," he said more strongly.

Another flame shot from her hand and twirled magically with the first, bonding their hands together.

"And should the time come, will you willingly help defeat the Dark Lord?"

Another audible gulp sounded from Lucius, but he nodded his head and with a strong voice said, "I will," once more.

As Hermione stared in disbelief at the men before her, another flame shot from her hand, whirling around the first two before disappearing into their clasped hands.

As they both stood, Severus said quietly to Hermione, "I will check the guard schedule and see when would be best. I'll get back to you within the next few days and then we shall leave."

"Thank you, Severus."

He looked down at her for a moment and then nodded his head before leaving the room.

"How are you...how are you feeling?" Lucius asked.

Hermione waved her hand in front of her abdomen and murmured a spell. A bright light shot from her palm and into her stomach, causing her to gasp and then smile.

“Completely healed now, thanks to Severus’ potions and a few other skills.”

“Since when can you do wandless magic?” he asked accusingly.

“For quite awhile now, but no one else can know of it.”

“You are more than right on that count,” he said quietly.

“I’m very surprised, Lucius.”

“Don’t be. Apologies do not come easily from me and I would hope you believe me to be sincere.”

“I do, but you’ve hurt me so much.”

Lucius stood quickly, grabbing his cane and heading for the door. “I am who I am, Hermione, and that will not change,” he said coldly before leaving her alone once more.

A/N: Two prisoners! One is a male with ginger hair and the other is a female---any ideas?

Lucius sat in the overstuffed armchair, staring into the fire as he swirled his expensive brandy absentmindedly and silently cursed himself. He had felt forced into holding an official ceremony for his dead wife and his only thought during the entire service was that his son wasn't there. The son who held a special place in Narcissa's heart and who had loved her deeply in return. Perhaps that was the reasoning behind his idiocy and the actions that had all but sentenced him to death--or would have, if it hadn't have been for Hermione's intervention.

Ah, Hermione. What was he to do with her now? Was the price she made him pay for his son's life too high? Could he actually handle joining sides with the Order of the Phoenix and not kill those he loathed so desperately. Not even a full day ago, he would have willingly killed any one of them, had on many occasions, and now he was expected to kowtow to them. Perish the thought and let him drown in despair and humiliation now. He was to become what he hated even above those of muggle decent...a blood traitor. The thought brought a groan from deep in his chest and he closed his eyes, willing it to all go away.

Could he really do this? Could he turn his back on the beliefs he had known since infancy and betray all he held dear? Draco had to be protected, of that there was no question, but what about protecting himself from the expected actions? The Dark Lord would not stay ignorant of such things for long and the repercussions would range from beyond brutal to begging for death. This was all her fault, he thought contemptuously, silently cursing the day he had agreed to take a slave.

He had often remarked to his son in jest that his hatred for the mudblood was more of lust than hate, owing to the fact that she was so beautiful. Draco had wanted her since Hogwarts and had found himself extremely jealous that his own father had taken her instead. Perhaps that was the reason he forced himself upon her, or perhaps it was punishment for Narcissa. The young man may very well think that his mother was innocent of any wrongdoings and that Lucius himself had betrayed his wife. No matter what the many reasons, Draco had landed himself in a prison cell, whether here or at Potter's stronghold, it mattered not.

And the witch knew wandless magic?! He could only perform small amounts of magic without a wand, so how was it that she knew so much. Could she not have stopped Draco's attempt without calling out to Severus and sending them all running to her rescue. That was a rather pathetic display, he scoffed. The Dark Lord and his two 'most trusted' rushing to save a mudblood slave. It was no secret, to anyone it seemed, that the Dark Lord wanted Hermione for his own. Propriety alone had kept him from taking her a long time ago. But, what now? What was to become of her now that Lucius had suddenly lost favor with the evil wizard? Two failed missions and a progeny failure left little hope that Lucius would find favor again anytime soon.

Besides, the mudblood had made him feel as though he was her world, and all the while, she had been with others. There was no denying the Dark Lord himself had had her, numerous times, but he felt sure that others had as well. His missions had been many as of late, leaving her open to the advances of others. He had watched her with Severus on several occasions and, although his long time friend had sworn there was nothing sexual between them, Lucius had never seen two people so close. He watched as they became quiet, but then suddenly agreed on something they had been discussing minutes earlier. What connection could possibly allow something of such magnitude that Severus would know when she was in trouble and needed them? Rabastan had also been overly friendly with her as well. They danced entirely too close and the younger man's hands often strayed to places they had no business going. He was almost positive that her angry reaction was more for show; pity their Master had come to punish Rabastan himself. It was also Lucius' experience that wherever one brother was, the other had been there as well. Rodolphus did ask to borrow her at one point. Maybe that was a ruse to make it look as though they had had nothing going on before. Perhaps, he had been to see the slave quite often in the past. It was starting to appear that Hermione Granger was far from innocent and anger and betrayal radiated off the blond man as he slammed his empty glass down on table and began pacing.

Severus was another issue altogether. How could the man betray all that they had worked for? How could he swear allegiance to the Dark Lord and then turn tail and run to that stupid old fool? Lily Evans' life



had never been worth the price he would pay when their Master found out what he had done. No mudblood was worth that price and, old friend or not, Severus wasn't going to take him down with him.

Dammit all to hell, he pounded his fist down on the mantel and watched the flames reach up to lick the bricks. What choice did he have now? Between the two of them, they had forced his hand and made him take the Unbreakable Vow. Now the decision was rather easy...die by the Dark Lord's hand or die from breaking the vow. Or perhaps, he thought wisely, things could be manipulated to his own advantage. That is, after all, what a true Slytherin of his substantial breeding and intelligence would do.

"So nice of you to allow me to join you, tim molisje," he said quietly, his calm voice washing over her as she smiled up at him.

"Thank you for coming to see me, Milord."

"You're no longer repulsed by me?"

She grinned wickedly, "You are growing on me, Milord."

A finger gently trailed along her cheek and she leaned into his touch. "How are you recovering?"

"Better than expected, thanks to Severus," she answered quietly.

He led her to the sofa, changing his appearance to the one he knew she liked and silently praising her acceptance of his touch. "Yes, Severus has always been skilled with healing. Tell me, tim molisje," he added, trailing a finger slowly along her jaw line and down her neck, "are you ready to soon seek your revenge?"

Hermione thought of Draco's actions and the anger quickly entered her voice. "I believe so, Milord."

"There have been enough formalities for the time being." He paused before adding, "I'm giving you permission to walk about the manor."

Her eyes widened in shock, "do you mean it?"

"I wouldn't have said so otherwise. If there is anywhere you shouldn't go, it will be warded and you will be unable to enter. But you must be accompanied by either Lucius or Severus. After tonight you may wish to seek someone out. That wish is granted as long as you behave yourself. Do what is wrong and you will pay dearly."

"Of course," she said happily. "What happens tonight, Tom?"

"Severus is being rewarded, once again."

"Surely you don't expect me to do that again!" she said angrily, standing up and pacing in front of him; arms crossed and face defiant while he chuckled.

"No, I do not wish for you to entertain another" he grumbled uncharacteristically before regaining his composure. "Severus is gaining a slave of his choosing from the captives tonight. He has refused this opportunity before, but it is what is due to him, so I shall offer again."

"And you, Tom, will you take another girl as well?" she asked heatedly, slightly unsure why she should care.

"Are you jealous, tim molisje? I have already denied Bella because of you. Would you have me deny all others as well?"

"Perhaps," she said quietly.

"What of Lucius? Do you wish him no others as well?"

She glared at him heatedly, "at the moment I don't care what Lucius does or doesn't do. But no, I prefer him to have no others."

"You are quiet the selfish little thing, aren't you?" he asked, half amused and half scornful.

"I can be," she said coyly.

She walked back to where he was seated and bent over, one hand on either side of his shoulders as she slowly kissed along his jaw and crawled on top of him. He groaned loudly and allowed his hands to run along her muggle jean clad thighs and rest possessively on her hips.

“Stop now, witch, or I will take you--healed or not.”

Pulling back, she looked at him for several moments before kissing him softly on the lips. “Thank you, Tom,” she said quietly, crawling off his lap and sitting next to him.

Her legs were thrown over his own and he stared at them, then at her, and back again for several moments.

“We’re becoming quite cozy, wouldn’t you say?” she asked amusedly while moving her legs, only to have him hold them in place.

“Never forget your place, young witch, or to whom it is you belong.” The warning in his voice was clear and she struggled to hold in her shudder even as her anger slowly won over.

“I could never forget such things, Milord, as I am reminded of them constantly.”

“An intelligent witch such as yourself, with reason to do things that would be considered unsavory to my cause, needs to be reminded of where she stands. You could do great things, become something far greater than even you yourself imagine, when I take over the world, tim molisje, but in the meantime, you need to be controlled. Working alongside purebloods is a right in which you have to earn.”

Pulling her legs away and looking at him incredulously, she responded heatedly, “controlled?! Am I some animal in need of domesticating? Something wild that must be contained and controlled as though I was one of those wretched monsters you employ into your service?!”

His smirk quickly turned to anger and in a flash, he had her on her back and pinned to the cushions. “Do NOT speak to me in such a

way, witch. I am your Master and I control everything you do and you will bow down to me like the others or face the consequences of your disobedience. Do you think there is something you can get by with, some trick you may have hidden that I do not know?! Do you really think you could use wandless magic and I would remain ignorant of the fact?"

Shock registered on her face and she stopped struggling against his strength. "How did you know?" she asked quietly.

"That is what is important to you in this moment? I could snap your pretty little neck where you lay and you want to know how I knew something."

"I do not fear you, Milord. If you wished me dead, I would have been so long ago. I've gotten under your skin and even though you don't realize it, you like having me around. So yes, I want to know how you knew."

"Play me, witch, and you will suffer," he warned, before loosening his grip and continuing. "I have known for a short while that you share a connection with Severus and that you have this ability."

"You have? Why did you not say anything?"

"And spoil the fun?" he chuckled. "Come now, pet, I am not a young wizard. I have learned in my time that it is a far greater reward to allow one to hang oneself than to move too presumptively and destroy what could be advantageous."

"You think you're allowing me to hang myself? How could I possibly do anything here? I'm stuck in this room all day and the only people I see are you, Severus, and Lucius," she spat, "What could I possibly do with your two most loyal servants to guard me?!" No longer looking into his eyes, she added quietly, "What would I want to do?"

He turned her face back and her eyes met his once again. "I am willing to take that chance. Hence the new allowances I am making for you. My only question is why you allowed Bella to continue your punishment."

"My wandless skills are very limited and I was unsure of your relationship with her, Tom."

"You were?" he asked, looking at her strangely when she nodded. "Bella was nothing more than a toy to me."

"And myself? Am I only a toy for you as well?"

"I do not know," he sighed.

Tom sat up slowly, releasing her hands and rubbing his temples before he continued. "I think you have manipulated me in some way..."

"You think what?!" she screeched. "How could I manipulate you, Tom? You're far too powerful to fall for such mundane things as potions and spells!"

"Exactly," he snapped, "and until I know what it is that you have done, I plan to keep a close watch on you. Now, it is time for me to leave and I suggest you get ready for the party. Muggle attire," he said disdainfully as he stood and appraised her body, "will not be acceptable and there are guests I would like for you to see."

"Of course, Milord."

"You may very well be tested tonight, tim molisje, and I hope you are ready for that."

Curiosity was delving into her body as she walked him to the door. She was fairly certain she would know the slaves, but if only there was a way of finding them, of saving them before they were to be given away. The door opened and he walked away, but she could hear his greeting and sighed at the reaction she was sure to receive in only moments.

"Lucius, Severus," he drawled, "so nice to see you. I assume you will both be in attendance tonight."

"Of course, Milord," they spoke in unison.

"Excellent. I will see you both then." He looked at Lucius with an evil glint and hissed, "your witch is getting ready as we speak, Lucius. Do take care not to be late, you would not like the consequences."

"We will be there shortly, Milord," the blond man responded, keeping any trace of anger from his voice.

Hermione inwardly cringed when Lucius and Severus walked through the door just in time to see her straightening the robes she had just put on.

"Having fun?" he sneered at her. Walking closer, he gripped her chin tightly and turned her to face him. "What I do with you is of no concern to him. I should fuck you right now, but I don't put my cock where others have so recently been."

She wrenched away from his grip and stalked to the table. "He came up here, Lucius, and we talked. That is all."

"Yes, I do believe that," he mocked. "I believe the Dark Lord has nothing better to do than to walk all the way to your room for a decent little conversation."

Severus' cold voice broke through their argument. "That is enough. Have we not enough to worry about without you two going at it like a couple of fifth years? I suggest we go to the meeting before our presence is missed."

"He knows, Severus," she said quietly, ignoring Lucius. "He knows I can do wandless magic and that you and I are connected. I don't think he knows the specifics, but he knows something and he's suspicious. He has granted permission for me to walk around the manor as long as one of you are with me. He also said there would be someone for me to see tonight and a test or something."

"Yes, he mentioned as much to us earlier."

Her faced became pained and her legs grew weak. "What if he wants me to hurt someone, Severus? I can't do that!"

"You are not being initiated into his ranks, Granger. The test I feel will be of loyalty. How you handle yourself when placed in a position to choose between your old life and your new. Much the way you handled yourself with the Weasley girl."

"You can do this, Hermione," Lucius said quietly, momentarily forgetting his anger as he watched her come undone at the thought of hurting those she cared for.

"Lucius, what if...what if it's Draco?" she asked, silent tears slipping down her cheeks.

He assessed her for a moment, taking in her obvious worry and fear for his son. This witch, who he despised, still managed to make him care all at the same time. What was there for him to do, but play along? He brushed her tears away with the pad of his thumbs, cupping her cheeks before gently drawing her to him, Her arms went around his waist and he cradled her soft body to his.

Pulling away slowly, he remembered all that had recently happened and pushed her to the side, "It won't be Draco. You are set to punish him in two days, publicly I might add."

Severus watched the display with growing concern. "It is time to go," he said, taking hold of Hermione's elbow and ushering her out of the door with a glare thrown in Lucius' direction. Whatever his old friend was playing at, he was certain Hermione would come out worse because of it.

The room wasn't magnificently decorated this time, nor was there the illusion of sophistication. Eight chairs were set off to the side, prisoners bound with black hoods covering their faces and their bodies in the positions of nervousness and defiance. Other tables and chair were set up around the room, many already occupied by other Death Eaters as their slaves sat at their feet.

Hermione looked at the other slaves intently. The ones that she recognized from before looked even worse; their bodies were pale and thin beyond starvation. Many had the appearance of broken bones that weren't allowed to heal properly and bruises covered most of their exposed flesh.

"Harden yourself now, Granger, or you won't last five minutes. You can not allow this to bother you. The fate of the world lies at your feet and your actions are being watched closer than you know."

Severus was right, of course, and she called the darkness to her, welcomed it like an old friend as she tore her eyes away from the prisoners and slaves.

"A seat has been saved for her," Lucius commented.

"It would appear she is finally being promoted in station ," Severus added.

"It would also appear that I am right here and you can actually speak to me," she snarled, taking her seat and glaring at the two men with her.

The doors slammed open and light flooded the dimly lit room as Voldemort entered and they all bowed. He spared a glance at Hermione before striding to his throne and taking his seat, allowing the others to do the same.

"My fellow Death Eaters," he began coldly, "tonight we shall once again honor one of my most trusted servants. There will be no grand event preceding the ceremony, as I feel this night will be more informative for myself and that is what matters most."

He stood and began stalking around the room, looking down at his servants as they bowed their heads in turn. His voice was cold and controlling, causing all thoughts to stop and concentrate fully on him. "You have all served me well over the past several decades, and most of you have had your rewards. However, only one has served me without fail and with increasing brilliance. He will be rewarded tonight with his choice of one of our fine prisoners, while others will



get their choice of what is left. Several of these,” he said, pointing to the eight chairs, “belong to the Ministry; high ranking officials that want nothing more than to serve those that will lose this war and wish only to take what we have worked so hard for,” his voice hardened as he made his point, but amusement crept in as he continued. “The remainder serve directly to ruin us.”

Hermione gasped, and then closed her eyes when she realized what it was he wanted her to see. The prisoners were not only a mix of Ministry workers who were loyal to the Order and its’ cause, but the others were Order members as well. Was her test to hurt those she cared about? At this point, was she even allowed to care about anyone...anything at all?

Voldemort pointed his wand at the prisoners and the hoods disappeared, leaving the prisoners visible to all eyes as they were assessed and reassessed by the Death Eaters. One, however, stared defiantly at Voldemort alone and refused to look away.

“Ah, Mister Weasley,” he hissed slowly, walking to the man glaring daggers into his very being, “hate me now, dear boy, but your life is now in my very hands. What I choose to do with you, or what I allow to be done with you, is completely up to me.”

“Slither into a hole and die you worthless snake!” he snarled, and then spat directly into Voldemort’s face.

“Crucio!” Voldemort watched coldly as the man before him withered in pain, pulling against his bonds and screaming when he could take no more.

“Would you have preferred to stay with your dragons, Weasley? I would have left you alone in Romania. However, here you will suffer and I will take great pleasure in that knowledge.”

Hermione watched as Charlie’s head dropped forward, too weak to be held high any longer.

“As I was saying,” he began again, “tonight we celebrate loyalty, intelligence, cunning, and all those things that make one worthy of

servitude. Severus Snape, tonight is your choice. You have declined my previous offers of having a slave of your own, but I am offering once again. Look at the prisoners and if there is one you so desire, then they will belong to you--to do with as you please."

"Severus, you have to take one so they can be protected! Oh gods," she exclaimed when the low light touched on all of the prisoners and the girl beside Charlie raised her head.

"What?"

"Ophelia, the one next to Charlie, she's an Order member as well. She's my...she was a good friend of mine."

"Yes, she asked about you the one time I saw her."

Severus broke their connection and walked to the prisoners, stalking around them as though he were looking at a beast for purchase. When he stopped in front of Charlie, the man raised his eyes to meet his and hissed, "Fuck you, traitor!" earning himself a chuckle from those around him, including Severus.

He continued assessing them, acting as though he were narrowing down his choices, until Voldemort spoke out, cold voice reverberating through the room as Severus stopped back at Ophelia. "Do any meet with your approval this time, Severus?"

"Yes, Milord," he responded quietly, "the only problem now is deciding which one."

"Perhaps you would like some assistance in that matter."

Severus turned to Voldemort sharply. "Assistance, Milord?" he asked in confusion.

"Granger!" the Dark Lord hissed, earning a surprised gasp from everyone in attendance.

She calmly stood to her feet and said "Yes, Milord?"

“Perhaps you could help Severus choose his slave.”

“Of course, Milord,” she answered, wondering exactly where he was going with this task and hating herself for condemning seven others to a fate worse than death.

The feeling of Charlie’s eyes on hers was more than a little disconcerting, but it was the anger and hatred she saw reflected in them that steeled her resolve and kept her moving forward. She assessed the Ministry members, some she recognized and some she didn’t, before moving to the two people she had never seen before. Dismissing those, she walked around Charlie and Ophelia, trying not to notice the silent tears and look of betrayal written on her friends’ face. They would have been close, of that Hermione was sure, had she never been taken in the first place. Ophelia was the one person, other than Remus, who seemed to truly understand what she had went through with Ron. Charlie himself was like a brother to her and she had no idea how she was supposed to choose between them.

Knowing she had to act before the decision was taken away from her, she decided to manipulate the choice to her advantage. Ignoring the tears and grimace, she gently stroked Ophelia’s cheek and down her neck.

“Don’t touch her, Granger, or I swear...”

She moved swiftly, grabbing Charlie’s hair and yanking his head back roughly. “You’ll do what, Weasley?” she growled. “Call Mummy to come yell at me? Do not disillusion yourself with ideas of control. You have none. You have nothing except what the Dark Lord so graciously bestows upon you, so mind your tongue.”

She released his head and turned abruptly to face Voldemort and Severus. “Milord, I fear I am torn between the two.” Walking behind the prisoners, she pulled Charlie’s head back once more and hissed, “this one deserves punishment for his actions against you, Milord. I feel Severus also desires a bit of retribution where he is concerned.” Stepping behind Ophelia, she gently moved her auburn hair to the side and exposed her long neck while she leaned her lips closer to

the woman's ear. "And this one, Milord, I feel would give him many hours of great pleasure."

"I see," he said, pride in his voice as he looked at both Hermione and Severus. "What do you say to them both?"

"Both, Milord?" Severus asked cautiously.

"Yes, both. There have been several times you have found the prisoners unworthy and therefore have chosen not to take one. It is for that reason that you shall have both prisoners. You may take them to your rooms to do with as you please."

"Thank you, Milord, I am most appreciative."

"Lay one finger on her, Snape, and I'll tear you to pieces!" Charlie screamed.

Severus fist shot out, striking the man in the chin and sending his head back with a snap. "Control your tongue, boy," he snarled, then grinned wickedly. "I will have the most fun watching as you beg for mercy while I fuck your little friend to within an inch of her muggle loving life. Then I'll beat you like the muggles you so adore until you wish for death."

Hermione couldn't believe what she had just seen. Well, truth be told, considering who was still standing there watching her as Severus pushed the other two out of the door, she could believe it. It had actually worked! She was actually able to manipulate Voldemort into allowing Severus to take both members of the Order.

"Oh, don't get too cocky, witch," Lucius hissed in her ear. "You still have to watch and see what happens to the rest."

Sadly, he was right. One by one the others were either sent to the dungeons or given away. Rodolphus eagerly took one of the Ministry workers; a wicked gleam in his eyes as he fingered the knife attached to his belt. Hermione shivered slightly, but was brought steadily back to anger when Lucius chuckled beside her.

"This is what it's all about, or didn't you think about the consequences beforehand?" he sneered down at her.

"I was well aware of the consequences, Lucius. It's only that seeing it makes it all the more real for me and I never fully understood what Death Eaters were capable of until this moment. Atrocious really."

"The first of many surprises for you, I'm afraid," he growled. "Now, shall we go see how your little friends are faring?"

Angrily, but rather eagerly as well, she walked away from Lucius and out of the room. Other Death Eaters were watching her closely, curious to know what her real status was becoming and why their Dark Lord had spoken to her, let alone taken her thoughts into account. What was so special about this slave, aside from the fact she knew Harry Potter. That in itself made them all the more leery of her. Only a few noticed that their Master was watching her as she left as well, a contemplative look crossing his usually closed features.

Severus gritted his teeth together in anger and silently cursed the Weasleys for their over breeding. His fingers gripped the young girls' arm roughly as he ushered her out of the door and down the hall, the other man was forced ahead of them by the wand pointed at his back. He shoved them both into the room and turned to ward the door.

“YOU TRAITOR!” Charlie screamed, rushing at Severus only to be thrown back by a silent curse.

“I suggest you sit down and shut up,” he growled angrily.

His breath caught for several seconds when Ophelia looked at him timidly before taking her seat on the sofa. Grumbling, Charlie came over and stood beside her, his glare never leaving his old professor.

“If you try and touch her, I’ll kill you first,” he warned.

He pinched the bridge of his nose between his thumb and forefinger. “Your heroics are tiring. The bath is through that door,” he said, waving his hand to the left, “and you smell of death and worse. Go clean yourself and then rejoin us.”

“And leave you alone with her? I don’t fucking think so!”

Severus sighed heavily, cursing his own existence and Gryffindors in general. He looked at Charlie and snapped, “Fine, then she can go. You’ll both find everything you need, but I refuse to smell either of you any longer.”

Ophelia looked almost grateful as she tentatively walked to the bathroom and closed the door behind her, still without speaking a word.

“How could you betray us like this?” Charlie yelled. “And Hermione?! My gods, what has happened to her? What has she done? How could she do this?”

“We will not trade meaningless words with each other any longer, Weasley. I suggest you sit there with your mouth closed and thank Granger for saving you both.”

“Saving us?! Giving us away as slaves, you mean. And to you of all people!”

“Yes, that is exactly what she has done. She has convinced the Dark Lord to allow me to keep you both, which means you will be together

and neither of you will be given to the other Death Eaters. Would you like to know what happens to slaves, Weasley?"

Charlie inwardly shuddered, then ignored the question by asking one of his own. "What about Hermione?"

Severus took a deep breath once again, thankful that the enraged man was starting to see reason, but unsure exactly how to explain the turn of events. Death Eaters often spoke freely in front of slaves because there was no one for them to talk to. In turn, the Dark Lord often used Legilimency against them to find out what his servants had been discussing. He looked at the man before him and slowly started probing his mind, only to find himself securely blocked.

"Stay out of my head, Snape."

Raising an eyebrow, he asked, "You know Occlumency, then?"

"Yes. Remus felt we should all learn, in case we were ever captured," he sneered, less angry, but still slightly frightened of the man before him.

"The other girl as well?"

"Her name is Ophelia and she learned it the quickest of us all."

"Excellent. Then use your brain and we'll try to find a way to send you home."

"Home?"

"Yes," he said with annoyance, "home, as in 'not here'!"

"What has happened to Hermione? Is she a traitor as well?" he asked, sitting on the sofa.

"I would have thought, Weasley, that you would have enough intelligence to realize by now that I am not a traitor and she most certainly is not one either. However, it is not my place to tell you what

has become of her, but, I must say, it is about time any of you asked about her well-being."

Charlie looked properly abashed and lowered his head in contemplation as he ran his fingers through his hair. They sat silently together for a moment, but jerked their heads up when there was a knock on the door. Severus dropped the wards and allowed Hermione and Lucius to enter.

"Hermione!" Charlie yelled, knowing instantly when he saw her face that she was still the same Hermione. Even standing beside a Death Eater, she was the same girl she'd always been and he rushed forward, wrapping his arms around her, and hugging her tightly. The men watched as tears sprang to her eyes and she hugged him back just as hard.

"Severus explained everything to you, then?" she asked quietly, drying her tears and then his as well.

"Well, not everything, but enough. You always did know how to do the best thing," he replied, gently stroking her cheek and forgetting all of his earlier allegations until Lucius' cough broke them apart.

"Malfoy?!" he yelled. "What do you want?"

"He's with us now, Charlie. He's on our side," she explained, putting a hand on his arm and holding him still.

He looked at her like she had just grown an extra head and then snorted. "What? Malfoy? Is on our side? There's no way Lucius Malfoy would ever side with us, Hermione."

Hermione led Charlie over to the couch and slowly began to tell him what had happened with Draco only days earlier, skipping over the intimate details, but allowing him to see the entire picture. She held his hand tighter as his anger grew and calmly explained to him that the Order had to protect Draco in exchange for Lucius' help.

"The Order can do what it wishes," he growled softly, "but when I see that little bastard, I'll kill him myself." He stood quickly and walked to



Lucius. "From what she's telling me, it sounds like your rapist son means entirely too much to you. Means more than Hermione and her feelings? Let me guess, you probably even blamed her for it too, didn't you? That would be just like you, like your kind."

"My kind?!" Lucius said angrily, advancing on Charlie until they heard the door open and Ophelia walked back into the room, dressed in robes of golden satin. They all stopped and looked at her, surprised by her resemblance to a statue goddess.

"Her...Hermione?" she gasped, then looked at the others in the room in wonder and shock. Lucius still had his wand raised and pointed at Charlie, but Severus was watching her with an unreadable expression on his face that made her more nervous than any wand ever had before.

"Ophelia," Hermione whispered gently. "It's okay, I promise. Lucius is going to lower his wand and no one is going to hurt you." She gave Lucius a pointed look and he slowly lowered his wand, still glaring at the accusing man in front of him.

The watery laugh from the other woman surprised them all. "It wasn't that long ago that Ron betrayed you and it was I who was doing the taking care of," she said, tears streaming down her face as her lip quivered slightly. "You were slowly becoming the little sister I never had and I've missed you so much. Please tell me you're still with us, Hermione."

Hermione walked over to her friend and held her close. "I hope you know I only said what I did," she told them both, "to assure your safety. I love you both and would die before I let anything happen to you. I wasn't even sure it would work, to be perfectly honest with you. He's not an easy man to manipulate."

Charlie moved over to her, hugging both women to him as tears of regret filled his own eyes once more. "I'm so sorry, 'Mione. So sorry I doubted you, that I gave up on you. Please forgive me."

The three friends were so wrapped up in each other, they didn't notice Severus slipping closer to Lucius. "See how it should be, my

friend. The apology comes easily from them and the love and forgiveness comes easily from your witch. She is an amazing woman who deserves better than the likes of you.”

Lucius glared at him and then walked over to the chair, taking a seat and leaving them in the center of the room before saying, “As sweet as this little gathering is, we really should start making a plan or whatever it is you fools do.”

“Shit!” Hermione said suddenly, sharing a look of concern with Severus before turning towards the others. “He’s coming! You both have to trust us and follow our leads,” she said quickly, while Ophelia, Lucius, and Charlie looked confused, but nodded in agreement.

Hermione pointed her wand at Charlie and suddenly blood began leaking from his nose and mouth, a look of shock formed in his magically swollen and bruised eyes while Severus’ hands became scratched and bloody before their very eyes.

“What of her?” Severus asked Hermione as he slowly pushed Charlie down and said, “act as though you’re unconscious or I will make the illusion a reality.”

“I have an idea,” she whispered back. Taking Ophelia’s hand, she walked her back to stand in front of Severus before slowly opening the other woman’s robes, revealing the white, creamy flesh just above her nipples.

“Hermione, what the hell...”

Looking at them both, she spoke, “No arguments, Severus. You know what he wants.” She looked back at Ophelia, “He has to do this. Please trust me.”

Ophelia looked confused and scared, but slowly nodded her head, just as Hermione heard the door start to creep open. She pushed Severus into Ophelia, effectively pushing them so that Severus had Ophelia pinned to the wall. “Do it now!”

Ophelia gasped when Severus' lips descended on hers and he quietly murmured, "Play along," against her mouth. His leg slowly pushed hers apart as he grabbed her thigh and pulled it up and around his waist. It took only a second before she responded in kind, opening her mouth and meeting his tongue with her own, moaning into his mouth when one had slid up her waist to cup her breast.

Hermione stood motionless, looking for all the world like she was enjoying the show and would be joining soon.

Suddenly, she felt familiar hands running along her shoulders and warm breath on her ear, making her moan in response. "You like to watch as well, Tim molisje?" he asked seductively as she nodded her head slowly. "You never cease to amaze me."

The two others broke apart quickly, Ophelia shrinking back into Severus out of fear of the man standing behind Hermione and now right in front of her. Surprised by her actions, he gently wrapped an arm around her waist and held her close.

"I rather thought it was Weasley that you would have been so happy to see, but I didn't know you'd allow Severus to have so much fun with him so soon." Voldemort moved his eyes from the bloody man and turned his attention back to the witch who was seductively pushing backwards into his growing erection.

He stepped back from her and walked to Ophelia, smirking when she cringed and pushed further into Severus. Gripping her chin tightly, he tilted her head up to face him. Her green eyes flashed in defiance as he stroked her copper hair from her face, assessing her features. "I did not realize the attraction, Severus," he said softly. "After all this time, then?"

Severus gritted his teeth and then responded, "Unfortunately, Milord."

"Tell me, American slave, are you a Mudblood?"

"Half-Blood, not that it matters," she spat.

Voldemort released her sharply, "Teach her quickly, Severus, or I shall do it for you."

"Of course, Milord," he said quietly.

"Do not let me interrupt. I will be going on my way now. I simply wanted to see how you were faring and if the accommodations were to your liking. And Lucius, do close your mouth as it would look much more appropriate."

Hermione glanced at Lucius and noticed the look of shock on his face before he closed his features and bowed his head. They all waited patiently until the door clicked, signaling Voldemort's departure and allowing Hermione to breathe once more.

It was Charlie who spoke first, his voice a quiet mixture of disbelief and awe as he looked at Hermione, who was staring intently at Severus, and slowly sat up straighter. "It's you?"

She turned her attention back to Charlie. "What's me?"

"H...His weakness, it's you?"

"What are you babbling about, Weasley?" Lucius asked, his concern masked by the coldness of his voice.

Ignoring Lucius, he spoke directly to Hermione. "'Tim molisje', that's what he calls you, right?" When she nodded her head, he continued. "Harry was talking to Remus the other day about a girl he was dreaming about. He didn't know who it was, but it's you," he finished flatly.

"The name, Weasley," Severus reminded him, looking at Hermione as her features froze in confusion.

"Yes, the name is Albanian. Loosely translated, it means 'my weakness.' You're Voldemort's weakness."

Hermione blinked her eyes several times, unable to ignore the sharp indrawn breaths from Severus and Lucius as Charlie said the name and then understanding dawned.

"Perhaps it would be best to revisit that another time," she said slowly. "In the meantime, he is called the Dark Lord out of respect for those that have agreed to help us. Now, let us think of a way to send you both back home."

"What about you?" Ophelia asked, finally stepping away from Severus. "If there's a way to send us back, then you could go as well."

"I can't leave," she said quietly, glancing at Lucius before looking back to her friends. "If I were to go missing, Severus and Lucius would be punished and I can't allow that. Besides, I have work to do here. This war will never end with the way it's being fought. The Order now has three people on the inside and that's our only advantage."

"Won't you be punished if we suddenly turn up missing?" she asked Severus as she walked closer to him and he backed up a step.

"We will find a way around that, I suppose," he answered, now holding his ground and glaring at the witch before him. "I can simply say I disposed of Weasley," he said, looking over to Hermione and ignoring Ophelia all together. "As for the other one, I'm not sure of the best course of action as you condemned her to the status of whore."

"Excuse me?!" Ophelia asked incredulously, only to be ignored again.

"Honestly, Severus, what did you expect me to do?" she asked exasperatedly. "She somewhat resembles Lily and it wasn't as though it was an entirely large stretch of the imagination to assume you'd want her. Besides, isn't that what we slaves really are? Whores kept no better than dogs?" Her cheeks flushed with anger and Lucius jumped to his feet.

"Now wait just a damn minute. I've done everything in my power to make sure you have been well taken care of!"

"Yes," she snarled, "and need I remind you of our conversation only hours ago? Would you like for me to remind you of what you said?"

"I know what I said! I know what I saw as well!"

"You know less and less every day, you arrogant bastard!" she screamed back at him.

"Perhaps," Severus said calmly as he walked between them, "this is a conversation better left for another time. A time when there is no audience present?"

"Fine," Hermione growled, walking away from Lucius and staring quietly out of the window.

A quiet voice broke the tense silence and had her turning around sharply to face Ophelia. "I'll stay."

"What?" she growled.

"It's the only way, Hermione, and you know it. He can easily pass off Charlie as dead, but not me. I have to stay."

"Stay here?" Severus asked in shock, speaking directly to her for the first time since the Dark Lord had left.

"Yes, as long as you refer to me as Ophelia and not 'the other one', then I'll stay and help in any way I can."

"Oh, you'll be referred to by quite a few names. Then you might wish to be called 'the other one,'" Hermione said sarcastically, glaring at Lucius again.

Severus threw up his hands and walked away from them. "Brilliant, just bloody brilliant! The Order meeting is tomorrow. Weasley will be returned then, along with Draco. I suggest you be ready, Granger."

"Are you trying to be difficult, or does Ophelia scare you?"

Her question went unanswered when Lucius walked over. "I'm going as well."

"Do what?!" Hermione screeched in surprise and Severus stood gobsmacked.

"You are taking my son to his enemies and therefore, I am going as well. I want assurances that no harm will come to him."

"Yes," Charlie said sarcastically, "so your pretty little self can sleep at night knowing that bastard is being taken care of."

"Weasley..." he growled.

Hermione quickly interrupted and walked over to Charlie. "Draco has to be protected, Charlie, and I'm holding you personally responsible for his well-being. No matter what our feelings are of his father, we need him, or we'll lose Lucius, and the more people we have on our side, the better off we are."

"I still don't trust him."

"He took a vow, he has no choice."

Lucius' breath hissed between his teeth. "A fact she's rather proud of."

"Do not forget, Malfoy," Severus said heatedly, "that it was I who made you take the vow, not Granger. If you are angry at anyone over that fact, then be angry at me and me alone."

"We're leaving," he said coldly, taking Hermione's arm and pulling her to the door.

"My gods," Ophelia exclaimed while Severus held him back, "she's his slave?"

"Yes," he answered sharply, "but it appears things between the two of them have grown rather complicated."

“I see.”

A grin worthy of the twins graced the dragon tamers' lips and he asked, “So, what does Harry's mum have to do with anything?”

Severus groaned loudly, knowing it was going to be a long night.



Hermione took a shaky breath and turned the doorknob. Severus had assured her that Voldemort would be away, meeting with his consort to the giants and then to the werewolves, so there was no chance he would come looking for her tonight. He told her he had also informed Voldemort that she wouldn't be healed for another few days, but that was all the time he could buy her and it ended tomorrow. However, now people she loved and who had once loved her in return were on the other side of the door before her. She hadn't been able to speak with Charlie again, since Lucius had dropped her off in her room and kept her there alone, so she hadn't had the opportunity to ask how they were dealing with Remus' death. Now, however, she wasn't sure that coming here was such a good idea at all nor did she think she could handle seeing the hatred and betrayal that was sure to be Harry's greeting.

"It is time, Granger," Severus said quietly. With a look over her head at Lucius, he smirked and added, "there will be something you will want to see tonight."

She took a deep breath, assuming Severus had finally lost his mind, and opened the door slowly. The house was still as dark as it had been when she had lived here before and they motioned to Lucius to keep absolutely quiet. Mrs. Black's portrait was just another small detail they had forgotten to mention to him, but even he looked around the room in disgust.

"This is where the great Order of the Phoenix resides?" he whispered with a laugh.

"Follow me," Severus said, but was redirected by Molly Weasley motioning them into the sitting room to their left and showing her surprise at seeing the other two with him.

Several members were already gathered and their voices carried softly to them as they walked down the short hallway. "Severus, I can't do this," she whispered shakily, trying to go back to the door, but when his hand caught hers gently, she stopped and looked up at him.

"Where is your courage now, Granger? It is time you faced them...time they were made to face you."

"What do you mean?"

"As the meeting progresses," he said vaguely, "you may learn things you never knew. You have nothing to be ashamed of," he added, looking at Lucius with accusation. "You have done nothing wrong."

"Alright," she reluctantly relented, "let's get this over with then, shall we?"

Lucius sneered, "Funny, one would think you didn't want to see those you loved."

"Love is something you wouldn't understand, Lucius," she spat as the door opened and they walked in, allowing his retort to die on his lips.

The conversations arrested immediately as those in attendance stared at the three in the doorway; the crackling of the fireplace adding the only noise.

Tonks was the first to speak, standing from her chair and angrily pointing at Hermione and Lucius. "What are they doing here?"

Severus stepped forward, allowing it to be obvious that he didn't like the witch in the least as she cowered away from him. "They are here at my request," he snarled, "so sit down and hold your tongue,"

"What are you doing here, Malfoy?" Kingsley asked as he raised his wand.

"Quite simple, Minister," he said hauntingly, surveying the others with obvious disdain. "I'm here to offer my services. My loyalty if you will," he added with a shudder.

"You? Loyal to the Order?" Bill snorted in disbelief.

Harry jumped to his feet, glaring at Severus as he slowly ground out in interruption, "What in the hell were you thinking, bringing a Death

Eater here!" His turned, pinning Hermione with a look she had never seen on his handsome face before, a look of hatred and betrayal she had known would be there, but hated to see nonetheless. It was his words, however, that cut so deeply tears sprang to her eyes immediately. "A Death Eater is bad enough, but Voldemort's whore is something else entirely."

A collective gasp went around the room, and Hermione turned to pour herself a shot of fire whiskey, hoping no one would notice the tears she wiped away quickly. Severus watched as the darkness fell over her and wished he could curse them all when she took a shaky breath and seemed to calm down--now ready for anything else those she loved would throw at her.

"Harry! How could you say..." Mrs. Weasley began.

It was then that the Weasley woman was interrupted by the door opening and someone walking in, eyes down as he searched the papers he held in his hands for something seemingly important.

"I'm sorry I'm late, but I think I found something and we should probably move down to the...oh my gods," he said slowly when he looked up, his voice falling to a mere whisper as his gaze landed on Hermione's back and Lucius groaned loudly.

The glass she had been holding dropped from her hands and shattered on the floor, the untouched liquid splashing against the wooden liquor cabinet. Slowly, as though afraid her world would disappear if she moved too quickly, she turned around to face the door. She looked at the man standing before her and then to Lucius, questions in her eyes that he had no answers to as her body began to tremble.

"But I thought...but you said," she stammered as Lucius shrugged and looked away from her. The sound of that beautiful voice cut through her thoughts and brought her back to the room and the occupants who were silently staring at her in confusion over her display.

"Hermione," he said softly.

"R...Remus?" she asked the werewolf through her sudden tears. He held out his arms and she flew into them, legs wrapping around his waist as he picked her up and held her close, papers falling to the floor unnoticed. His laughter was intoxicating and she gave him a watery smile before planting kisses all over his face. When her lips met his, she kissed him deeply in her enthusiasm. Growling low in his throat, he threaded his fingers into her hair and held her tighter to him, returning the kiss with a passion neither knew existed.

Severus clearing his throat was the only thing that broke them apart. Remus slowly released her, letting her slide down his body and against his erection before landing unsteadily on her feet. His hand nervously went through his hair and he blushed slightly before saying, "I'm sorry, full moon tomorrow."

She grinned back, stroking his cheek and clearly enjoying his embarrassment as she quirked her eyebrows and said, "I'm not." At that moment, his consciousness recognized what his wolf had already sensed. There was something dark surrounding her and it called to him like a long lost lover. He wanted nothing more than to push her against the wall and take her roughly, make her scream his name as she came undone around him. She seemed to sense the change in his demeanor and slowly stepped closer.

He cursed himself and then cursed Harry for ever asking him to view the images of his dreams. When Harry had realized who the witch of his dreams really was, he was certain he had missed something, that there was a trick Voldemort was playing on him that had nothing to do with Hermione. Remus thought he could be objective and look at the dreams without becoming involved the way Harry had, but he had been wrong. Even in the images witnessed through a pensieve, he could sense her darkness, sense the crackling of the magic around the two as they fucked each other, and admitted to himself that the wolf inside wanted the witch before him just as much as the man outside did. Telling Harry only that there was nothing he could see wrong, but that there was indeed something helping Hermione, they let the subject drop and he watched as Harry became increasingly cold and angry, while he himself began to hunger for her. When she

gently stroked his cheek he could feel his body responding to her and his desire to have her became even stronger.

Remus looked at Severus, trying desperately to achieve a sense of normalcy. "Is this about what we spoke of yesterday? Why you needed me to give him the address?"

"Yes."

"Wait, you knew he was alive and you didn't tell me?" Hermione hissed in Severus' direction.

"I tried, Granger, while you were drowning yourself if you remember, and you sent me away."

"Oh," she said softly, then grinned sheepishly up at him, making him roll his eyes, before Remus trapped her once again with his piercing blue eyes.

"Let us move to the kitchen, then," Molly said disgustedly and they all shuffled out of the room and down the hall, afraid to say a word about what they had just witnessed. Hermione and Remus remained, still silently drawn to each other.

"Granger!" Lucius snapped, angering the young witch as she spun on her heel and glared at him before they walked out the door with the others.

"You told me he was dead! Why would you do such a thing? Do you have any idea what that did to me? Do you?! And knowing it was you who killed him." Her voice carried to the rest and they all stopped to listen, intrigued as much by the words as the relationship between the two.

"You angered me, witch," he said coldly.

"HALF-BREEDS! SCUM! BLOOD TRAITORS! HOW DARE YOU ENTER THE MOST NOBLE HOUSE OF BLACK? HOW DARE YOU BEFOUL THIS HOUSE WITH YOUR FILTH? MUDBLOODS..."

Hermione's furious gaze jerked to the portrait as Remus and Kingsley ran to cover her and Severus actually smirked at the events unfolding before them.

"SHUT UP!" Hermione yelled coldly at the portrait as Lucius continued to glare at her and the air began to crackle in her rage.

"MUDBLOODS! FREAKS! UNWORTHINESS SHAMING THE HOUSE OF MY FATHERS! YOU HAVE NO RIGHT! BE GONE FROM MY HOUSE YOU FILTHY LITTLE MUDBLOOD!"

Hermione suddenly cracked. It was clear she could handle no more and there was no one that could stop her, though Severus tried and was thrown on his arse for his troubles. Her hands came up, palms pointing at the portrait as she screamed and the darkness ran through her body.

"I SAID SHUT UP!" she yelled once more; fire shooting from her palms and flying at the vile woman. Remus and Kingsley barely had time to jump away as terrifying screams filled the house and Mrs. Black slowly burned where she had stuck herself to the wall, never to speak again.

Taking a deep, shuddering breath, Hermione turned back to Lucius to resume their conversation, not realizing the way everyone around them was staring at her. "Your jealousy is becoming more than a little annoying, Lucius, but if you would like, I will gladly give you something to be jealous about!"

"He could have killed me, Hermione," Remus interrupted, now propped up against the burnt wall and looking at the angry blond man before him curiously. "All he had to do was say the words and I would have been dead, but he let me go instead."

"Is that true?" she asked Lucius softly.

Lucius sighed. "I knew what his death would do to you and I didn't want to have to deal with a pathetic, whimpering witch. However, you-

"

“So, she’s your whore as well?” Ron asked snidely, only to find three wands pointing at his chest.

Remus and Lucius were livid, but it was Severus’ controlled, cold voice that was heard through the snickers and cries of indignation. “From what I hear, Weasley, you would know all about being a whore. I suggest, if you would like to continue with that ability in future, you never speak ill of her again.” He flicked his wand downward and Ron turned pale with realization.

The members of the Order gaped in shock, all knowing that Severus Snape could rarely be bothered to defend himself, much less someone else.

“Now, we have business to attend to and then we must leave.”

They continued their retreat down the stairs and into the dimly lit kitchen. Several members took chairs around the table, but many chose to stand instead. A few newer ones that Hermione didn’t really recognize were hanging in the shadows, watching the events without joining in themselves.

“Everything you do benefits yourself in some way, Malfoy. What are you asking in return for your so called loyalty?” Bill asked intelligently.

Kingsley stepped forward once again to face Lucius. “Do you expect us to believe that you care what happens here? That you care about the Wizarding world or the Muggles that reside outside of it?”

“Make no mistake, Minister, I am here for my son and myself. I no longer care for the fate of the Wizarding world. And I certainly do not care for your filthy Muggles and your half-breeds. My family comes first and at this moment, all I have is my son. He has angered the Dark Lord and will not survive past tomorrow. And I am unwilling to sacrifice him as an example to the cause.”

“What about Hermione?” Remus asked gently, suddenly aware of the older wizard’s affection for the young Muggle-born witch. He could barely contain his grin when Lucius shifted uncomfortably and glared at his new leader.

"How that is of your concern, I do not know, but my relationship with Miss Granger is our business and ours alone," he said haughtily. "If you do not want my help, then I shall leave, and take your precious Miss Granger with me."

"Your son? Draco has been sentenced to death?" Arthur asked, surprising Lucius that one of the people he had openly scorned would care about his son.

"I'm not surprised," Harry said, finally speaking, but not very wisely. "What did he do this time, lead another innocent man to his death, only to have someone else finish the job for him?"

Severus blanched slightly while Lucius took a deep breath and controlled his anger, hatred emanating from his voice as he looked upon the man he was supposed to hate and now also follow. "No," he said, voice shaking only slightly as he glanced at Hermione, "he-"

"What he did is of no importance here. Only know that he is to be protected and in return, you receive an influential member of the Dark Lord's inner circle," Hermione said.

Harry spoke again, looking at Hermione like she was a stranger not to be trusted. "Dark Lord? Or perhaps, we're merely adding more fuel to Voldemort's already growing army. We can't trust you anymore, Granger," he said coldly as his voice began to rise, "you're with him now. I know! I was forced to watch!"

The others took a step back, remembering what she had done in the hallway earlier and fearing the young woman they had once loved while marveling at the change in the dynamics of the once strong relationship. Few saw Severus hold his hand out to stop Lucius from moving toward Harry himself.

"Ah, Harry," she cooed, walking over to him and stroking her fingers down his chest. "Does it make you feel proud, make you feel like such a big man, to call me the things that you have tonight? I believe you're just a very confused boy. It's not me you're mad at, Harry, is it? You know deep down that I have no choice in what I do if I wish to



live and not become a sniveling excuse for a witch like your little girlfriend. It's really yourself that you're angry with, isn't it, Harry? Angry with yourself because Tom made you want me and that's something you can't take back. You wanted to be the one fucking me, didn't you Harry, and now you hate yourself for it," she purred, watching as his eyes flashed, but he refused to answer.

"I think it's time for you to leave," came yet another voice from the doorway, this one slightly scratchy and drowning in false politeness. "Go back to your evil wizard! But why don't you tell them all the truth before you leave. Go on, tell them how I only came to be here because You-Know-Who sent me here himself. You wanted him all to yourself and you talked him into sending me back so that traitor could rejoin the Order."

Hermione's anger was palpable and, as the others looked at Ginny, surprised that she had finally spoken, Hermione walked closer to her, backing her slowly against the wall as the younger witch showed a fear no one had seen in her before. When Hermione flicked her fingers, the girl was bound to the wall and unable to move.

"You were rescued, you ungrateful piece of filth, because you asked me to save you," she spat, noticing, but not caring that the rest had jumped to their feet to defend Ginny.

"That's not true and you know it! You were jealous, that's all. You wanted me away from him so you could have him to yourself! It's just like with Harry! And he even lets you call him 'Tom'!"

"I find it rather sad, Weasley, that when I first saw you, you were terrified and begging for help, while now you're jealous and making baseless accusations."

"You just want everyone to want you! I heard the things you told him about punishing Harry. I told you he'd never forgive you!"

"I know you did, Ginny," she snarled quietly. "It would have been rather difficult for you to not hear as you were in the room at the time. I wasn't wrong though, was I? I know Harry better than anyone, including you and probably even himself." She was looking at Harry

as she continued to talk to Ginny. "He won't talk to you, will he? He'll barely look at you and he certainly hasn't touched you. That was the punishment I spoke of, the way Harry tends to punish himself for the deeds of others. I'm only surprised you held your tongue this long," she said, turning back to Ginny. "Did it take someone more damaged than yourself to enter this house before you could open your stupid little mouth and make your ignorance known?" Ginny lowered her head as tears rolled down her flaming cheeks before she began sobbing loudly, wrenching the guilt from Harry once more.

"So, wandless magic, Missy?" Mad Eye asked, a small smile twisting his features and making him look more frightening. "You can put her down now."

"Among other things," she whispered, slowly returning his smile and releasing Ginny who crumpled to a heap on the floor and was immediately comforted by Molly.

"Would someone kindly explain what is going on here?" Arthur asked gently, looking at Hermione and Severus.

"No. There are certain things that you don't need to know," Severus explained, while leaning against the counter as the others assessed Hermione warily. "Just know that we are doing what we can and you'll be told what you need to know as you need to know it."

"Right, like we're going to just allow that. Especially from her," Tonks sneered.

Hermione, who had been quickly scanning each of their minds as Severus spoke, was more than a bit surprised and hurt at what she had discovered from several of them.

"Leave her...it's too late...we must go...she's not worth risking your life over...look at the blood, she'll never survive...it's too dangerous...she's not worth it."

"There are many things that are allowed with the benefit of consequences. Perhaps that is where the Dark Lord has become better adapted than the Order. For example, cheating on your fiancé,

and then trying to pass the child off as his in a sad attempt to win him back, would be punishable by death for the stupidity of your actions alone,” she said, looking directly at Tonks, anger emanating from her.

Tonks face blanched, along with Remus’, while Ron’s turned green. “You mean it’s not mine?” Remus asked coldly as he looked at her rounded stomach and she rushed to stand directly in front of him.

“Remus, please!” she pleaded. “You have to understand. You have to know that I’m sorry, Remus, please! I never meant to hurt you. Ron just...he was very persuasive and he kept talking about how Hermione didn’t know anything, how she was cold and frigid, and I...” she broke off, clutching Remus’ shirt as he pushed her roughly into a seat and walked to the other side of the room, fists clenching at his sides.

“Weasley?” Lucius scoffed, speaking for the first time in quite awhile and reminding everyone that he was still there. When Ron glared at him, then attempted to draw his wand, Lucius grabbed the younger man’s throat and held him tight. Severus held the others off with a look as Lucius smiled wickedly at the scared man before him. “Perhaps, Weasley, all she needed was a real man to show her how, to make her want to enjoy being with a man. You certainly are not that man.” He pushed Ron forcibly down in a chair beside Tonks and watched as his face turned redder and he looked at the ground.

“Now listen here, Hermione,” Mrs. Weasley said as she helped Ginny up and sat her beside her brother, “you can’t come in here acting the way you have and expect us all to forget everything that’s happened. Merlin help us, if what Harry has said is true, then you’ve been with the most evil wizard alive! How are we supposed to forgive things like that?”

She walked around the room slowly, looking at each person in turn and inwardly analyzing what she’d learned from them. Coldly, she responded, “I did not ask for forgiveness. I do find, however, that what truly hurts me, Mrs. Weasley, is knowing that the people I loved the most, the people I called my family, left me in that house to die all those months ago. I assume that is what you meant earlier, am I right, Severus?”

Tearing his glare away from those in the room and looking at Hermione, he answered evenly, "Yes, that is what I meant."

"Hermione, that's not true!" Harry said, forgetting his anger as guilt over his own betrayal won over.

"Isn't it?" she spat, before softening her voice slightly. "I've been in your minds tonight, Harry, and I know the truth. Few of you wanted to go back for me even though the danger had almost passed," she said sadly, stopping to offer Remus, Mad Eye and Kingsley a smile of thanks before moving back to Harry. "I was left for dead and taken by Death Eaters. Had it not been for Lucius and Severus, I would have suffered a fate much worse than any death you could ever imagine. I've done what I had to do to survive and I regret very little of it. So I suggest you take Lucius up on the offer. Then I'll leave you all to your peace once more and you will no longer have to worry about the indecencies of my actions."

"You can't accuse us of something like that and then leave," Harry cried indignantly.

"The only accusation I have for you, Harry, is that you are a coward." She paused for a moment as he glared at her again, her voice lowering and becoming gentle, reminiscent of the way she used to talk to him in the past. "It is you, Harry, who is supposed to save the world, but all you have done is hide in this house. At least Sirius wanted out, at least he wanted to fight. You allow others to order you around like a petulant child instead of becoming the leader I know you were born to be. You are going to save the world, Harry, because it's who you are. It's time now for you to rid yourself of the pettiness and indignation and stand up to be the man your parents would be proud of; the man I know you truly are."

Several long moments passed in silence before Remus spoke up, his voice hard and controlled, "All in favor of allowing Lucius Malfoy into the Order."

Most hands tentatively raised and he looked at Lucius seriously. "You're in on a temporary basis. I'm assuming we have to provide shelter to your son, a safe house where he cannot be found."

"Yes, but if anything happens to Draco the entire deal is off and I shall tell the Dark Lord everything." Lucius said quietly, barely tearing his gaze from Hermione.

"You won't be able to do that, we have provisions in place. So, when can we expect him?"

Hermione walked up beside Lucius and said, "Now. Along with someone else who you will be most thankful to see."

"I hope you can do this, Hermione," Lucius said stiffly.

"I've been practicing, somewhat," she said nervously.

Hermione snapped her fingers twice and in the middle of the floor lay Draco and Charlie.

"Charlie!" Mrs. Weasley screeched, running to her son, but shrinking back at his appearance. "What have they done to you?"

"Relax, Mum," he said, standing to face Hermione and Severus. "If you don't mind, I'm growing rather tired of the blurry vision." Severus raised his wand, muttering a few spells and returning him back to normal before Charlie gently kissed Hermione's cheek.

Lucius walked over to his battered son and hoisted him off of the floor and onto a chair beside Ron and Ginny.

"You are to remain here, Draco, until I come back for you personally. Do try and mind your manners."

"My own father," he spat, "has become a blood-traitor, and for a little whore no less."

"And you're alive to tell the tale, Malfoy, so I suggest you shut up," Hermione growled.

"Hello, Granger," he said lewdly as his eyes traveling up and down her body knowingly. "Miss me?"

"Come with me, Malfoy," Charlie ground out, jerking the boy up by the arm and dragging him forcibly out of the room as he yelled his protests.

"Where's Ophelia?" Bill asked suddenly.

"She has decided to stay behind until we can find some way of returning her without raising suspicion."

"Stay behind! What will become of her? What will those animals do to her?"

Severus' upper lip curled in anger and all but Hermione cringed. "She has been given to me and she will remain in my care, Weasley, so do not concern yourself over her well-being. Though I must say, it is nice to see you all finally asking about someone who has been taken." He let the accusation hang as the three turned and walked up the steps and to the front door.

"Hermione, can I have a word with you, in private?" Remus asked as they reached the door and he took her hand to lead her to another room.

"What is it, Remus? Have I mentioned how happy I am that you're really alive?" she asked, smiling as he returned her smile without letting go of her hand.

"I think you made it obvious," he chuckled. "I needed to tell you some things that you may not know. First, I think the werewolves are revolting against both sides, so be careful. Also, a few days ago, when Harry realized it was you he was dreaming about, he asked me to watch his dreams in a pensieve. I know that was an invasion of your privacy, but I thought I could help him. He was really torn up about everything he had witnessed and so I agreed. I noticed two things, Hermione."

“Go on,” she smirked, clearly enjoying her newfound knowledge.

“You and Voldemort, when you’re um, together, are actually sharing your magic. Did you realize that?”

“We’re doing what?”

“I’ve only heard of it happening, but I’ve never seen it before then. Every time you touch, the air tends to spark a little, have you noticed that?”

“Yes,” she answered warily.

“That is your magicks coming together and being shared between you. I don’t know if he is aware of this or not, perhaps that’s why he feels you’re his weakness.”

“I don’t know either. Charlie just told me what that name meant last night.”

“You must know that I trust you, Hermione. I always have and I always will. Give Harry some time to adjust, he’ll come around.”

“Perhaps. And the second thing?” she reminded him.

“Ah, yes. The second thing is this,” he suddenly growled, pushing her against the wall as his lips crashed down on hers. He slipped one leg between her thighs and pushed his body close to hers, forcing the breath from her lungs and the pit of her stomach to wind and tighten with desire. She found her hand threading in his hair as she held him to her and kissed him with abandon.

“It would appear,” came Lucius’ hard, cruel voice from the doorway, “that you have become a whore to half-breeds as well. We’re leaving. NOW!” He grabbed her arm and pulled her to the door, leaving Remus in the room trying desperately to catch his breath and control his urges.

“Granger, wait up.”

“What is it, Fred?” she growled. Lucius groaned beside her, trying to pull her body closer to the door.

“We just wanted you to know that, had we been there, we would have went back for you.”

“I know,” she said quietly, pulling her arm out of Lucius’ grasp and walking up to them. “And that means more to me right now than you’ll ever know.”

“If there’s anything we can do, Hermione, anything at all...”

“You just let us know.”

“Thank you. I’m sorry I burned the wall.”

“Don’t be!”

“Yea, the old bat is gone for good and we can actually talk in this house now!”

“Lovely,” Lucius sneered, “can we go now?”

Charlie came back down the other stairs, looking at the scorch mark on the wall and then at Hermione. “Thanks for that, it’ll be a right sight better around here without her screaming at us.” He looked at Severus and added, “take care of them both.”

A silent nod was his only answer as they walked out of the door and disappeared with a ‘pop’.

“Unbelievable,” Bill sighed.

“But they’re right,” Harry said sadly, a single tear slipping from his brilliant green eyes as he watched the spot his best friend had just vanished, “she’s right about everything.”

“Or it’s a trap, a very intelligent trap. One that, with Granger on their side, they could have easily come up with.”



“True,” he said softly, closing the door and walking quietly up to his room.

A/N: Another chapter for my darlings! Don't forget (for those of you who have read Darkest Desires--my Moony/Hermione fic) to vote at the Quill to Parchment awards coming soon!

Apparently, some things were not meant to be. At least, that's the thought that kept running through Hermione's mind in the last few hours. When they had returned from Grimmauld Place, Lucius immediately dropped her off in her room, warded the door against her leaving, and left with only a few words defaming her character. Funny, just when she was allowed to leave the room on her own, he decided to keep her locked in like the worthless slave he still saw her to be. Granted, she could easily undo the wards, but dealing with his temper wasn't high on her list of things to do and there was really no reason for her to leave except to see Severus and Ophelia.

It also didn't help her state of mind that he continued to call her a whore and all but spit in her face. His problem wasn't one that she thought could be solved easily and since she couldn't read his mind, there was nothing she could do. If he was going to act like a petulant child, then she would have to deal with it. Which also meant she'd have to deal with the feelings of...well, she didn't know what they were exactly, only that she wished more than almost anything that things were the way they used to be between them. At one point, although he said he was only using her for sex, they did seem to have something. Now it seemed all they had was a growing expanse of anger and resentment.

She walked over to the table, looking at the collection of books only to realize she'd already read them all and it had been quite awhile since Lucius had bothered to bring her any more. She could go visit Ophelia later, once Lucius calmed down and 'let her out', but in the meantime she was bored and had absolutely nothing to take her mind off the feelings of abandonment that were coursing through her heart. It would seem that those she loved, or even possibly could have loved in the future, were steadily deserting her and she would soon have only herself left. Perhaps that's as it should be.

It was obvious that Harry would never speak to her again. Then again, most of the Order would never speak to her again. What had possessed her to even consider going to them? Wasn't it obvious that

they had thought so little of her before and could now care even less? If it wasn't obvious before, it certainly was now. She growled at the thought of Ron and Tonks. What they had done to her and Remus so long ago was bad enough, but to try and pass a baby off as Remus' was unconscionable. However, in order for Remus to believe such lies, he had to have been with Tonks since Hermione had been taken. Perhaps they were all rebuilding their lives and moving on without her. Not that there was anything to be had for her and Remus, but she considered him as something akin to a soul mate of sorts, a kindred spirit. He was not, however, her best friend, and the loss of Harry was one she tried desperately not to think about. Maybe what she said would do some good after all. It was possible he would heed her words and step up to his position. Then again, it was also possible he would do the opposite just to spite her.

The muffled footsteps interrupted her musing and were followed shortly by the wave of magic that quickly brought the wards down. She jumped around, hoping Lucius had finally decided to...well, to do something. Anything was better than the cold indifference he had been showing her as of late, or the bitter anger she felt was undeserved. Turning her attention fully towards the door and the one man who often sought her attentions, she decided not to linger on the fact that she was upset about Lucius' behavior. Voldemort stood in the doorway, an excited gleam in his eyes as several Death Eaters, Lucius and Severus included, stood behind him.

"It is time, Tim Molisje, for you to exact your revenge. Follow me."

"Of course, Milord," she said, head bowed as she walked behind them.

"We will be going to the dungeons," he said quietly to those around him, "so that you may witness what becomes of those that do not obey my orders. This witch was not to be harmed, and yet, harm came to her. Therefore, I will allow her the honor of revenge...in any way she wishes."

"Thank you, Milord," she said calmly. All hint of nervousness was hidden as she walked slightly behind Voldemort.

Severus soon entered her mind. "He's excited about this."

"Yes, right up until he sees no one in Malfoy's cell and becomes rather angry."

"Be careful. There is no telling who he will blame and who he will punish."

"I will; you as well. A part of me wishes it were actually happening."

"As do I, Granger. There was no excuse for his actions and I would have killed him..."

"Milord," someone called from another doorway.

He turned on the intruder, wand raised slightly at the bowing figure as he growled, "What is it, McNair?"

"Please, forgive the intrusion, Master, but I have information you will want to hear."

"Do you presume to know what I want, McNair?"

"N...No, Master," he stammered, still bowing.

"That is what I thought." He turned to Hermione and the others and said, "Go to the dungeons and arrange the prisoner. I will be down shortly." Very gently, he cupped Hermione's cheek, stroking her cheekbone with his thumb as he said in a lover's voice, "Do not start without me, Tim Molisje, or I will be most disappointed."

Grinning wickedly, she licked her lips and responded, "I wouldn't dream of it, Milord."

She chanced a glance at Lucius after Voldemort left, only to see him glowering at her as they continued down the hallway.

"So, your Mudblood slave is the one, Lucius?"

"Excuse me?" he ground out, looking over at a man Hermione didn't know.

"Yes, the one the Dark Lord has been panting over. We've all been wondering what the attraction was," he said, stopping in the hallway and gripping Hermione's chin as he looked at her face before his hand began trailing down her neck, "but from here, I think it's fairly obv..."

He suddenly fell to the ground, screaming in pain. Lucius stopped his advance upon him, looking confusedly at Hermione.

"What is the meaning of this?" Voldemort asked angrily when he seemed to appear out of nowhere.

Hermione dropped her hand and the man stopped screaming. "M...Master, she has a wand hidden!" his trembling voice yelled in warning.

"Witch?" he asked, and Hermione could almost swear there was a hint of pride in his voice.

"He insulted you, Milord," she pouted coyly.

"Did he?"

"Yes, Milord, he did. He said you were panting over her and she cursed him for his insolence," Severus stated evenly, but a guarded look remained on his face as he watched Hermione.

Voldemort stepped around the shaking wizard and took Hermione's arm, leading her down the hallway and allowing the others to follow behind.

"Impressive," he said so only she could hear.

"Thank you, Milord. I do not like for those who serve you to insult you. Serving you should be an honor, not something to mock, Milord."

As they descended the staircase that led to the dungeons, the air became colder and soon she could see her breath before her. There was a smell in the air, the smell of blood and death, that, even in this dank prison, didn't belong. The hairs on the back of her neck stood slightly, but when she felt Severus hesitate behind her, she knew she was right.

"Milord," she said quietly, "something is wrong."

"Wrong?"

"Yes..." she stopped mid-sentence when her eyes landed on the mangled and bloody body of Rabastan LeStrange and she saw a shadow dart across the room. Werewolves were the only thing that could leave a human looking like that, and she knew by the shadows and smell that they were still there.

I think the werewolves are revolting against both sides, so be careful.

"GET DOWN!" she shouted, immediately stepping in front of them all and holding up her hands, only to realize they were all still standing and she couldn't fire a single hex for fear of hitting them. She looked at the others and realized they were all looking at Voldemort. His eyes met hers briefly.

"Do as she says," he said cautiously, observing the witch before him closely, but not crouching with the others.

A streak of red light shot from her hand and she slowly began turning in a circle. Yelps and howls could be heard around them and the Death Eaters just looked at each other in confusion as they slowly backed away. It was only when the werewolves began to quickly encircle them faster than they could be wounded that the Death Eaters knew actual fear. Their fear only served to feed the wolves agitation and they were soon snarling and growling as they advanced on their prey and Hermione found herself unable to keep up with them.

Voldemort stood, wand raised as he fired several useless curses. "We must get out of here. I do not know what the hell you are doing, but you're only serving to make them angrier."

You and Voldemort, when you're um, together, are actually sharing your magic. Did you realize that?

Remus' words floated through her mind once again and she looked at the man beside her, silently taking his hand, both jerking slightly in surprise when the magic flowed from one to the other and back again.

"Trust me," she said quietly. Then she turned around; a brighter, stronger light shot from her hand and the yelps and howls increased in intensity.

"Dammit, Granger!" she heard Severus yell after several moments passed. "That's enough! You've killed them all and you're going to kill yourself!"

She lowered her hand and looked around. He was right, not a single wolf was standing, most not even breathing for that matter.

"Rabastan!" Rodolphus yelled, running to his brother and cradling the bloody body in his arms.

"We will discuss this later," Voldemort murmured into her ear and she nodded her agreement when he released her hand. "Check the prisoners!"

The Death Eaters quickly checked the prison. "They're gone, Master. All dead."

"And Draco Malfoy as well?"

"Y...yes, Master. There was...there was nothing left of him. Only blood."

"How very fitting," he snarled, glaring in Lucius' direction as the man's face regained only a slight touch of color and his eyes never wavered

from Hermione. "That is, however, the end of one disappointment. Who were they and how did they enter?"

"Milord, if I may, I believe they could have only obtained entrance by someone they knew. I would first figure out the whereabouts of Fenrir Greyback."

"He is not at his post, Milord. The Mudblood may be right."

"Shouldn't he have been secluded for the night?"

"Y...Yes, Milord. He had made plans to lock himself in the prison cell next door, with the muggles, for the night."

"Ah, yes, I remember," Voldemort responded in obvious disgust. "Find him, bring him to me."

They all walked back upstairs a few moments later, leaving only a few to clean up the mess and sort out the werewolves. Hermione tried desperately not to let the sounds of the strong, evil, grown man crying over his dead brother effect her. She silently wondered if she were to die in the near future, would anyone cry for her? Had she lost everyone that not only she cared about, but that cared about her as well?

"Come with me," Voldemort said quietly and she followed him to his room. It was a sad thing for her to realize that at least one person wanted to be with her at the moment, even if it was the most evil wizard alive and a man she was supposed to hate. Lucius walked away without a word and Severus gave her an unreadable look before he departed to his rooms.

Voldemort closed and warded the door before turning back toward her. "Explain to me what it was exactly that happened in the dungeon."

"I took a chance and it paid off."

"And what chance was it you found yourself taking while we were in danger?"



"Certain spells can injure werewolves, but I assume you know this. I also assume you know that said spells can kill weaker werewolves. If we had retreated, they would have treated us as prey and attacked. I did what I thought best under the circumstances and we're all alive because of it."

"Watch your tongue, Mudblood, or I'll make you wish you had." She sighed heavily, already growing weary with his threats.

"Of course," she said in a falsely sweet voice.

"Crucio!"

She fell down to the floor, her body shaking violently from the pain, but she refused to cry out. He lifted the curse and she slowly rose to her feet, glaring at the man standing before her whose red eyes held a hint of something she couldn't name.

"Do not make me do that again," he said quietly.

"Of course, Milord." Her tone was full of reverence as she bowed before him.

"Get up," he snarled. "Is it your intention to anger me to the point of cursing you once again?"

"No, Milord. I am only trying to do as you ask. However, I find that difficult at times, Milord, when what you ask of me is not what pleases you when you receive it."

"Stop playing obedient slave and look at me," he hissed, knowing that cursing the witch before him would do no good, but wishing to wrap his fingers around her slender throat. "You were told to explain your actions not to state the obvious in such a disrespectful tone."

Taking a deep breath, her eyes met his and she began trying to explain something that she herself didn't fully understand. "Have you noticed that when we're, you know, together, that the air seems to shift and change?"

“Yes, the air does crackle every time I fuck you,” he said crudely, waiting for her to continue, but already beginning to understand.

“I believe, Milord, that we are sharing our magics. I’m not sure how it works exactly, as I don’t have a library to do my research, but I feel certain that that is what is happening between us.”

“If you had a library, I presume you could readily find the answers you seek.”

“Yes,” she grinned up at him, “there is little one cannot find in a proper library.”

“And, with my allowances for you to walk about the Manor, you have yet to find the library here?”

Her eyes widened in excitement. “No! I mean, I haven’t really had a reason to go wandering around,” she explained, leaving out the fact that she had been busy with Charlie and Ophelia and then the Order meeting.

“Then I suggest you make yourself useful and very soon. I want to know the possible advantages and the consequences.”

“Of course, Milord,” she practically squealed before regaining her composure. “I’m sorry.”

“No need.” Did he almost smile at her exuberance? “Tell me, Tim Molisje, what is it that you fear?” he asked, walking up to her and trailing a finger along her cheek and down to her shoulder.

“Fear?” she asked cautiously, trying to think of what fears she may have.

“Yes, fear. You do not fear me, although you should, and I want to know what it is that you do fear.”

“No, I’m not afraid of you. I’ve had many years to overcome that fear.”

“Ah, yes, helping Potter thwart me repeatedly,” he said, a slight bite to his voice. “Tell me, would he have been able to do so without you?”

“I don’t think he would have. Our first year, when you came back with Quirrell...”

“It was you who got past Severus’ task, am I right?”

“Yes, how did you know?”

“It is precisely the kind of thing you could do and he told me as much when I returned. What else?” he asked, settling down on the sofa and allowing his intrigue to show.

“Well,” she nervously began again, it wasn’t everyday you explained to an evil wizard how you had stopped his earlier regenerations and such. “I already told you about the basilisk in our second year. In our third year, we saved Sirius Black and realized who Peter Pettigrew really was.”

“I take it you are not fond of my servant?”

“Not really, no.”

“Was it you who made him fall down the steps, then?”

“Of course not, Milord, I told you it was not me when you asked before,” she said earnestly, knowing she couldn’t allow him to know how well she knew Occlumency.

“Continue.”

“You came back our fourth year, but I helped Harry get through the maze. Not the smartest thing I’ve ever done, now that I look back on it.”

“I rather think the opposite,” he smirked, watching her closely. “I have heard tales of your brilliance from several of my followers and I believe you are downplaying your role. However, I could put your

intelligence to use. Do you think you can work alongside those you vowed to destroy at one point?" he asked.

"My alliances are not what they used to be, Milord."

"You must relieve my curiosity," he said, smirking again as she looked at him questioningly and wondered what else she would be required to tell him. "Is it true that you hold no apprehensions with saying my name?"

"Tom?" she asked in honest confusion.

"No," he ground out, reminding her once again that he wasn't exactly pleased to be called by his muggle name. "My real name."

She quickly understood what he meant and quirked an eyebrow at him. "Of course. No, I have no problems saying your name, Lord Voldemort."

"Interesting. And where did such daring come from? I fashioned a name for myself that I was sure others would fear to speak, so how is it that a mere girl would be willing to say my name?"

"Easy, you're not friends with Harry Potter for years without learning a little courage when it comes to, well, you."

"I see. Come here, witch." he commanded.

She walked to his chair and gasped in surprise when her clothes suddenly disappeared. "Kneel," he commanded once more and she readily obeyed. His clothes vanished as well and his erection stood proudly before her. He leaned over and took her chin between his fingers, looking at her longingly, but with concern as well. "Are you healed?"

"Yes," she answered, unconsciously licking her lips and making him smile slightly down at her.

"Excellent. It is most unfortunate that you did not get to show young Malfoy his place."

Her agreement was lost on its way to her mouth when he pulled her hair back from her face and pushed her forward. She greedily lapped at the juices covering the tip of his large cock as he leaned his head back in pleasure and she felt herself become wet for him. She licked up and down his shaft slowly, moaning when his fingernails dug deep into her scalp and she took him in her mouth.

"Yes, witch," he sighed, forcing her further down.

After several long moments of sucking his glorious cock, he pulled her hair back sharply and ordered her to stand. "Turn around," he commanded and she turned in front of him. His hands trailed up her thighs, around the globes of her arse, and landed softly on her hips. With one hard pull, she was on his lap and his erection was pushed against her back. He lifted her slightly, positioning himself at her opening before jerking her down and impaling her body with his cock. Her scream of pain and pleasure was music to his ears.

"Gods, witch! So tight and wet for me," he moaned when she began rocking on top of him. "So sexy...so wanton. Yes, fuck me like the whore that you are."

She gritted her teeth at his words, but her eyelids fluttered closed and she lost herself in the sensation he was creating within her. Her hips rose and fell to the command of his hands on her body and she moaned loudly when he slowly slid them around her to her front. His fingers barely brushed her nipples, causing her to gasp and arch into his touch while one arm wrapped securely around her waist. The heat pooling in her middle, coupled with the tight coils ready to spring drove her to madness with want for release.

He chuckled softly, before rasping into her ear, "Do you feel the air crackle around us now? Do you want to come, Mudblood? Do you wish for me to allow you such pleasure?"

His lips brushed against her neck as he yanked her hair back roughly and she squealed before responding, "YES! Dear gods, let me come!"

“Are you giving me orders?” he growled, pulling her head further back by her hair and sinking his teeth into the juncture of her neck and shoulder. He smiled to himself when she whimpered in pain. The hold around her waist tightened and he forced her down harder on his cock, the sound of flesh smacking flesh echoing throughout the room and mixing with their moans and his crude words.

“You are not allowed to give me orders,” he said softly. One hand left her body and within seconds she felt the cold, hard tip of his wand at her neck. “Crucio,” he barely whispered and she screamed out in surprise and pain. Her body convulsed and shook with the effects of the curse, but she refused to scream again--choosing instead to hold herself erect as he brutally fucked her tight hole and the pain soared throughout her body. After a long moan fell from his lips, he released the spell and began touching her again. “You are my slave and I give you the orders,” he said calmly, allowing her to slowly regain control of herself.

She raised her hips again, hands firm, but shaky on his thighs as she used the leverage to allow her body the needed height. In her anger, she brought his cock almost completely out of her hot passage before she slammed her body back down on his again, repeatedly hitting the spot that made her say and do things she wouldn't otherwise say or do. Never had she experienced anything close to what she did with him, the way her body burned and ached for release when her darkness met his was enough to drive her insane. The anger erupting inside of her only served to add more fuel to the ever growing fire inside of her and she felt as though she could explode at any second. She knew this was wrong on entirely too many levels to fathom, but she needed this release. She needed to feel wanted and there was something eerily sensual in the way he fucked her.

He roughly gripped her breast and twisted her nipple, making her moan loudly once more. “Make yourself come,” he rasped. Her hand moved from his thigh and she started to flick her clit, gently at first, but then harder and harder when his hips thrust up to meet her own. She couldn't suppress the groan that fell from her lips when his hand moved between her legs and over her fingers, helping to bring her body to completion. “Come for me, gorgeous witch. Let me feel your body react in the way only I can achieve.” His breath caressed her

neck with his words and her entire body began shaking only seconds before the inner walls of her pussy clamped down on his cock.

“Fuck! Yes!” she screamed loudly, slowing her motions when her legs began feeling like rubber.

He hoisted her hips up and thrust his cock into her repeatedly. Over and over he entered her, harder each time until she thought she would surely split in two, but instead came once more without warning. “That’s it, whore, make me come!” he snarled, spearing into her body again and again before releasing his seed deep within her walls and allowing her to collapse back against him. After several moments, he slid out of her and performed a cleaning charm on them both before picking her up with a gentleness she never knew he possessed and carrying her to the bedroom.

The door slowly opened, causing Ophelia to jump back and cringe in fear until she saw Severus. Thankful that he hadn’t witnessed her moment of weakness, she rushed forward to greet him and see what he was levitating through the room in her direction. She knew others in the Order were frightened or put off by him, but he reminded her of her father, surly and distant, but willing to accept and give love. Something intrigued her about him and she wanted to learn more about the man behind the scowl.

As the box was set down, he motioned for her to open it. “I brought you some things to keep you occupied,” he said quickly. “No one is allowed to enter except for Lucius and the Dark Lord, so you should be safe enough.”

Her eyes darted to the door before she looked back at him. “Tell me about him?”

Severus watched as she looked in the box and literally squealed. The sound was strange and foreign to him, but she seemed happy enough with the books and such he had brought for her. “The Dark Lord?” he asked, walking away and fixing himself a drink so as not to be expected to look at her.

“Yes.”

"He's a hard ruler who is intolerant of other's mistakes. Loyalty is vital for our survival, but he offers little in return. He will ask more of his servants than they are willing to give, but rewards them greatly when they achieve their goal."

"Well, that seems rather tame," she said and he felt her eyes boring into him as he threw the drink to the back of his throat and grimaced.

Severus withdrew his wand and muttered a spell around the room. "You must always remember," he said seriously while walking closer to her, "that there will be ears where you least expect them. The Dark Lord is not tame, nor is he a kind man in any way. He's cold, cruel, and calculating. He assesses any situation and manages to change things to suit his needs and his alone. He's power hungry and lacks the abilities of compassion along with most other human emotions. His intelligence is unprecedented, he'll use the cleverest of trickeries to achieve his means and when it comes to politics, he plays them all."

"Unscrupulous...cunning...Machiavellian. I got it," she murmured. "But they say that absolute power..."

"Corrupts absolutely," he finished for her. "It is true he has taken the leap from ruler to tyrant."

"It's nice to know that you have a good grasp of the situation then," he smirked.

"Yea, and here I was thinking that Bloody Mary was evil."

"Bloody Mary?" he asked in confusion.

"Sorry, she's an American witch. Hundreds of years ago, when witches were being prosecuted and those ignorant of our true abilities were burning them at the stake, an old witch was killing young girls and stealing their youth. She was pretty gory about the entire affair and really added fuel to the already raging anti-witch fire."

"Bloody Americans," he mumbled.



"At least we don't call everything bloody. I mean honestly," she said, grinning at his bemused expression.

"That was rather interesting, then," he amended.

She chuckled softly, then stood from the couch and clutched the pillow tightly to her chest. He watched her curiously as she walked closer to him. "Is there something I can help you with?" he asked warily.

"Nope, not a thing," she said cheerfully. "Actually, I wanted to thank you for taking such good care of me, considering the circumstances, and if there's anything I can do for you, just let me know."

The glint in her eye made him almost as nervous as the Dark Lord's wand and he slowly backed away from her, only to find his knees hitting the chair seconds before he fell into it. At least with the Dark Lord, he thought, he had experience and knew what to do.

"Can I get you another drink?" she asked sweetly, slowly walking around behind him.

"I suppose."

"Okay, just one thing first," she said and he snorted, knowing he was right to assume she was up to something. What he didn't expect, however, was the pillow smacking him in the back of his head.

"What the hell!" he asked angrily, quickly jumping from his chair and spinning around to face her--wand drawn.

She was grinning at him. "That is the price you pay for insulting Americans," she chuckled, ignoring his anger and his wand as she threw the pillow on the couch and laughed loudly when he flinched. Her laughter stopped abruptly when he stormed from the room, leaving her alone once more.

Okay, he had overreacted, Severus thought after hours of contemplation. That was obvious enough, but what was he supposed

to do about it and why did he care what she thought? How could one woman expect to make jokes and laugh when she had landed herself in a situation as grave as this one? A situation which required him to protect her, even if he himself felt off kilter around her.

He slowly opened the door, ready to explain the severity of things to her once more, when the pitiful whimpers coming from the bed caught his attention. His wand offered the only light and he walked quietly to the bed and gazed down upon her sleeping form. She was having a nightmare. He also realized he had forgotten to bring her the clothes she had requested and she lay sleeping in her robes. Feeling like an arse, he lay his hand on her shoulder and shook her gently.

“Wake up, woman.”

He didn't expect her to reach out and grab his wrist and he certainly didn't expect her to pull his arm over her and hold it tightly. The contact served to calm her considerably, but was rather uncomfortable for him. Sighing heavily, he did the only thing he could think to do at the moment; he lay down beside her and pulled her close to him, hoping she would release her hold on him soon and he could go home to his own bed and try to forget the way her soft body felt against his.

"You do not understand and I don't think I can make you see what should be obvious," he snapped angrily, slamming his palms down on the table for emphasis.

"What do you mean, Remus?" Molly asked incredulously, never once believing that there would be a valid reason for the young girl's audacity.

The inner circle of the Order surrounded the kitchen table of Grimmauld Place and were currently discussing their newest concern--Hermione Granger. Tonks had left shortly after Severus and no one had seen or heard from her since. Ron should have been worried, but if he was, it wasn't showing through the disgusted sneer that had been plastered on his face since he was told that his job from now on would be to guard Malfoy. Harry, however, had remained oddly quiet throughout the entire discussion. He had actually not said much to anyone since Hermione's departure and several were beginning to worry about him.

"She has somehow taken in a darkness. I know that's a very inadequate way of describing it, but there you have it. Because of this, she has the ability to handle things that would cause most of us to run in the opposite direction, but she doesn't handle them in the normal fashion. Whether she is as proud of her actions as she made out to be is unknown, but something tells me that she's slowly losing herself in the midst of everything else. The blame for her condition lies solely at my feet and it is an injustice that I am trying to rectify."

"Your fault?" Harry asked suddenly. "You may lead the Order, Remus, but you do not control the members. No one went back for her," he said coldly, casting accusing glares at those around the table. "And I challenge any of you to find something wrong with what she said. No matter how it may have upset our delicate sensibilities," he snarled, "she was correct."

"Whether she appeared right or not is of no consequence to us. What matters is that she has become one of them. She may not bare the mark, but her actions spoke of it all the same."

“Molly, you have to understand...” Remus tried angrily once more, only to be interrupted by the one man he was quickly growing to hate.

“Understand what, Remus? All we need to know is that she is a whore who will spread her legs for apparently anything and anyone. At least when she was with me, she was discreet. I would wager her anger is to cover up her true feelings and how much she really misses me.”

Remus couldn't help it, he laughed. It was a humorless laugh, but a laugh nonetheless. “She has lain with the most evil wizard the world has seen since Grindlewald. Do you honestly think you compare? Do you honestly think that she spares a thought of you when she's with him?”

“You seemed to want her pretty bad yourself when she was here! What sort of pathetic display was that?”

“Like calls to like, I suppose,” he said quietly.

“What the sodding hell is that supposed to mean?” Ron asked stupidly.

“Ronald! Watch your language!”

“It means that dark calls to dark. The darkness that's in her called to the darkness in myself and I felt mesmerized by her.”

“Like that's an answer,” Ron scoffed.

Remus slammed his hands down on the table once more, the anger flashing through his eyes sending the younger man staggering backwards into his mother. “You have no idea what it's like,” he ground out, “how it feels to fight the darkness within you every single day. Knowing that at any second you could lose control and hurt those you care about. Until you do, Mr. Weasley, I suggest you keep your mouth shut and your stupidity to yourself.”

“I do,” Harry mumbled beside him, slowly standing up and facing the room. “I know what it's like, I know how Remus feels and I

understand. Hermione was right, I'm not mad at her, but at myself...and it's time I did something about it."

"Here! Here!" Charlie added. "I owe my life to Hermione and so does Ophelia. A debt that I fully intend on repaying no matter what the situation. I suggest you all consider doing the same."

"Do you think Lucius Malfoy can be trusted?" Arthur asked reasonably.

"No," Remus replied, "but as long as we have his son, I think he can be made to help us."

"Then I suggest we go on the offensive," Harry added with a new sense of confidence as the others nodded in agreement.

Severus slowly came back to consciousness. The relaxed and groggy feeling was quickly replaced by the most intense pleasure he'd felt in quite a while. Looking down with a start, he saw a head of copper hair around his midsection, bobbing up and down deliciously on his hard cock, and he moaned in pleasure. Her silken strands tickled his bare thighs and he suddenly wondered how he came to be naked. He remembered the way she'd pulled him down with her when he had tried to awaken her from the nightmare, but he also knew he was clothed at the time.

The question died on his lips with a groan when her silky hot tongue drew up the length of his erection and slid back down. "Oh gods," he muttered, fisting his hands in her hair and guiding her near perfect motions.

It was lingering in the back of his mind--the thought that Hermione was the last person to do this--but he quickly squashed it down for fear of going limp inside her warm mouth. Thinking of one that was like one's sister was not conducive to pleasurable oral sex.

She began moving faster, working her tongue along his length while her hands skimmed down and massaged his tightening balls. His stomach muscles clenched, he felt ecstasy curling his toes and flowing through his veins.

“Gods, stop witch!” he growled, but she continued suckling him harder and harder. Her moans vibrated down his shaft and his hips bucked upwards, shoving his cock further into her mouth with each thrust. He held her head tightly by the hair and bucked upwards again, releasing himself inside of her with a loud groan. His body fell back to the bed limply and she slowly leaned back, laughing slightly when he looked down at her.

“Good morning,” she said sweetly, wiping her lips and grinning at his expression. “Oh please, Severus, don’t look so shocked. I thought that while I was here, we might as well indulge in something that we both want.” Her naked body slid up his until she was resting on his chest.

“Where are our clothes?”

She nodded to the table beside the bed and he saw his wand laying where he so ignorantly left it. Death Eaters did not leave a wand laying where a slave could reach it, even if the chances of it working for said slave were slim to none. He grabbed this thought and clung to it.

“It worked for you?”

“Was it not supposed to?” she asked with confusion as her tongue trailed around his nipple.

He felt himself becoming hard for her once more, but tried to tamp down the feelings she aroused in him so easily. “You have much to learn,” he said instead.

She grinned at him again and he realized he rather liked the expression on this impossible witch he had been forced to claim. “And you must teach me...Master,” she added playfully, laughing when he rolled his eyes.

With a wicked smirk, he flipped them both over and pinned her to the bed. “Where shall we start?” he asked, bending his head lower and

kissing her neck roughly. Her laughter immediately turned into moans and she arched her back into his touch.

Severus skimmed his fingers along her collarbone, down the sides of her breast, and gently stroked her side, following the trail with his mouth. When he licked her hardened nub, she shrieked and clung to him, begging with her body for him to continue.

“Pay close attention. First rule,” he said, looking up at her with half-lidded eyes, “when the Dark Lord is in your presence,” he flicked her nipple with his tongue, relishing her responsiveness when she gasped, “you must keep your head bowed and do not look at him.”

A shaky sigh escaped her parted lips and he moved slowly to her other perfect breast, his tongue skimming her hot skin along the way. “Rule two,” he continued, barely moving his mouth from her body, “in anyone else’s presence, you must act subordinate to me.”

He chuckled softly when she snorted, before slowly moving his lips down her taut stomach, swirling his tongue around her belly button. She arched into him, nails scraping his scalp with delicious pain. “If he addresses you, you must refer to him as ‘Master’ or ‘Milord’ without fail. Otherwise,” he said, giving her a smile that softened his entire face and made her moan again, “he’ll curse this delectable body of yours and I may be forced to kill him before his time.”

When he felt her shiver beneath him, he arched an eyebrow at her in question. “I rather liked you before from the stories I’ve been told by others in the Order, but I find the real man to be so much more than I ever expected.”

“Yes,” he replied, smiling once more when he slid a long finger along her thigh and into her tight heat and she squeaked in surprise, then her hips bucked into him, “I’m sure they had such pleasant things to say.”

She moaned when he inserted another finger inside of her and then lowered his head. Taking in the scent of her arousal, he felt his cock twitch in anticipation, but ignored the feeling. He slowly ran his tongue

around her clit before flicking it across the tight bundle of nerves and sending her hips bucking even harder than before.

“Rule four,” he continued as though they were having a normal conversation, “you may not speak to anyone except me, unless they speak to you first,” he said calmly. When she glared at him, the effect only half as intense as it would have been without the lust clearly written across her face, he flicked his tongue over her clit again. His fingers thrust in and out of her and her hips rose in time with his movements. His other hand pinched her hardened nipple painfully and, with another swipe of his tongue, he felt her muscles clench around his fingers and her hips bucked even more wildly than before. She screamed his name, panting it over and over until she fell limply back to the bed. He admitted, if only to himself, that he had never seen another woman more beautiful.

Slowly, he crawled back up her body, his tongue following the same trail up that it had followed down. His legs settled between her thighs and she immediately opened them farther by wrapping both legs around him, his cock pushing slightly at her opening. “Some Death Eaters are required to share their slaves,” he said seriously, “but I will not allow that to happen with you.”

She cupped his face in her hands and brought him forward until their lips met and she kissed him with all the emotions they were both too afraid to voice. Gently, he slid his hardened length inside of her willing heat and groaned at the feeling. “You’re so tight, you feel so good,” he rasped.

The next thing he knew, her hips raised forcefully and her legs tightened around him, forcing him to thrust inside her until he was buried completely.

“Take me, Severus,” she purred, “I’m yours.”

And he did. In the early morning light, Severus Snape took his new slave to heights of unmentionable bliss over and over until they were both too weak to move and they no longer cared about seeing the outside world.



It was just after they had eaten breakfast that Lucius strolled into the room, barely sparing a glance in Ophelia's direction before glaring at Severus.

Severus smirked, then drew her closer to him and kissed her on the forehead. "Leave us for a moment. Go shower."

It was obvious that she was miffed, but she nodded her head and walked into the bathroom, thankful that at least the 'command' was spoken sweetly.

"You seem to have grown rather fond of your slave, my friend," Lucius said with a sneer.

"I'm becoming used to her, if that's what you mean." Severus' voice was indifferent as he studied his long time friend with amusement. "It is obvious you did not come here to analyze my relationship with her."

Lucius sighed and it was only then that Severus knew that his friend finally understood the plight in which he had found himself in. Lucius' question, however, shocked him. "Is she truly a replacement for you?"

"Of course not!" he answered heatedly before calming himself. Funny how his first thought was of the slight against Ophelia. "No, Lily Evans cannot be replaced, but Ophelia is remarkable in her own right."

"Will you send her back if the chance arises?" he asked thoughtfully.

Severus contemplated the question for a moment. He knew the answer immediately, just not why the thought of her leaving would affect him the way it was. "If she so desires, then yes."

Lucius snorted. "Perhaps they will be less cruel to her than they have been to others."

"I would hope," he replied, growing angry at the way those around Hermione had treated her recently. "However," he added with malice, "we have become no better than they. You have pushed her so far away that she may never come back to you. Is that what you wanted? To lose her because you fear you love her?"

"Love is a fool's emotion!" Lucius snarled.

Severus grinned at him. "Then you, my friend, are a fool."

Lucius paced closer to his friend, barely resisting the urge to strike him. "Worry about your own slave and leave mine out of this!"

"Mmm," Severus replied in mock thought, "I believe I'll go join her."

Storming from the room, Lucius walked aimlessly around the large manor. Unwelcome thoughts were so firmly ingrained in his mind that he had no choice than to finally acknowledge them. How did he feel about the Mudblood slave that had wormed her way into his...well, she got under his skin anyway? Was it too late for him to make amends?

His feet led him to their room and, when he stopped at the doorway, he sighed deeply. Perhaps torture and death would substitute for this discussion of feelings and such. Not one to put off the inevitable, he drew his wand and took down the wards. When he opened the door, he was surprised to find Hermione sitting in front of a stack of books, obviously concentrating on something and paying him very little mind.

He realized then that although he had been neglecting her out of anger, the Dark Lord had not. Of course, he thought, she had been all over a filthy half-breed not long ago and that certainly did not warrant special favors from him.

"Hermione," he said coolly, "what are you doing?"

"Research," she answered distractedly, sparing him barely a glance.

"I see. And what kind of research is it that you are doing?" He was becoming irritated quickly from having to ask her basically the same question twice.

"That is a matter between the Dark Lord and myself, Lucius."

She paid him the same attention she would an annoying pest and he slowly felt his ire rise further. He stomped over to her and roughly pulled her up from her seat by the arms.

"I thought," he snarled, "that the idea was not to help him. Or has spreading your legs made you forget your true objective? Are you nothing more than a whore?" he spat.

Her eyes became as cold as ice and he felt the air crackle slightly with her anger. A sudden electric jolt inside his fingers made him drop her arms in shock and stare down at her with narrowed eyes.

"If I am a whore, Lucius, then I am a whore of your own making."

"Meaning what, exactly?" he asked, slightly surprised at her own anger and at her words as well. Wasn't he the one that showed her what pleasures the human body could possess? Wasn't he the one who had taken care of her when others would not have been so generous?

"I have only willingly been with three men in my entire lifetime." Sudden angry tears welled in her eyes and surprised him further. "Your own son," she growled, "raped me and you did nothing. Don't think I do not know what I am to you, what I've become."

"And I tortured him for his transgressions!" Lucius bellowed.

"Because you were forced to!" she yelled back. "Not because you care!"

He caught her arms roughly once more and shook her slightly, bringing his face down to hers. "Take note, witch," he said in a deadly cold voice, "had it been anyone else they would have been dead at my feet for touching what is mine...and make no mistake, you are mine."

"I belong to no one! And you are unable to love anyone but yourself!"

He smirked. "You talk of love and caring as though they are emotions freely given. Disillusion yourself now, Hermione. You will not find what you seek in me."

Hermione glared at him before her eyes widened in shock and pain. She clutched her chest in her hand and fell into Lucius' suddenly outstretched arms. After a few moments, however, she stood up, waving her hand and covering her research before walking to the door.

"Where do you think you are going?"

She turned to face him, her chocolate eyes met his grey before she turned back and walked out the door. Severus was in pain and needed her; no longer would she look to Lucius for comfort and understanding.

A/N: Ah, my wolf--I so love my wolf! So, the voting for the Quill to Parchment awards is now underway! If you're a fan of Moony and Darkest Desires, then please go cast your vote for Best Rare Pair! Otherwise, cast your vote for anyone--just vote!! :D

A/N: Why is Severus in pain, you ask? Because Voldemort is very angry! Thank you all for your reviews, I appreciate every single one of them! And voting for the Quill to Parchment awards ([awardsdotquilltoparchmentdotcom](http://awardsdotquilltoparchmentdotcom)) is still open. If you love Moony, then please vote for Darkest Desires in the Best Rare Pairing category! Only 8 more chapters of FLM to go!!

Severus could hear the banging before he entered the room. The sounds of objects being slammed into nearby walls and the subsequent screams of frustration, did not bode well for his own personal well-being. The Dark Lord was angry, very angry. Bracing himself against the pain that was sure to come, and disregarding the strange sense of desolation and resolve that he felt was coming from Hermione, he unwarded the door and quietly walked in.

Crouching down on the floor in a position of false respect, he calmly asked, "You sent for me, Milord?"

The objects stopped flying and a very agitated Dark Lord gripped the edges of the table before him tightly, the knuckles of his already pale hands turning even whiter. "Rise," he said with agitation and more than a small amount of anger.

Severus did as he was told and gasped when he looked at Voldemort's face. It appeared that as the wizard's anger and frustration grew to heights that even Severus hadn't seen before, his facial features began changing swiftly from that of the cold, inhuman Lord Voldemort, to that of the cold, but fairly more human Tom Riddle. He watched in shock as the eyes remained the same, but the face changed at a nauseating rate for several seconds before keeping the appearance of Lord Voldemort once more.

"I need to know, Severus," he started calmly, belaying the evidence of his anger in an attempt to seduce the servant before him into a sense of camaraderie, "and you are to tell me every little detail that may concern the issue."

"And what is the issue in which you speak, Milord?" he asked warily.

Suddenly the table went flying across the room with amazing strength and Voldemort stood directly before Severus. "I need to know what that witch has done to me!" he shouted, magical energy crackling throughout the room, making Severus cringe inwardly. Fear was not something he normally allowed himself to feel, but in this instance, the emotion was fast becoming overwhelming.

"D...done to you, Milord?" he questioned, knowing who the witch was, but not what she had done and hoping to every deity known to man that the Dark Lord was not aware of their current plans.

"Yes," he snarled stalking even closer to Severus and watching as the man stood his ground. "What has she done to me!" he bellowed.

"Perhaps, Milord, if you were to give me more information, then I would be better able to contribute."

"Crucio," Voldemort hissed, watching coldly as the brave man before him fell to his knees and then the ground, but refused to scream out in pain. Torturing Severus had never been as much fun for that reason alone.

"Get up," he snarled again, but his demeanor calmed significantly and he spoke quietly for the first time since Severus' arrival. "I find myself...confused, disoriented, angry, and have even had the uncharacteristic desire to be nice to her. If she has made a rather poor attempt to poison or to curse me, then I need to know. If potions are at fault, then I will kill her myself."

"Forgive my boldness, Milord..."

"Speak freely, Severus," he said, his agitation coming back quickly. "I will not curse you for the truth, which I know you will give to me."

"Of course, Milord. As I was saying, do you not find yourself angry most of the time? That is nothing new, am I right?" he asked rather bravely.

"Of course I'm angry!" he snarled. "I have servants who couldn't even begin to scratch the surface of an Arithmancy problem heading

missions which seem to fail at an increasing rate! However, never once have I wanted to curse my most trusted and loyal servants for looking at a filthy, little, mudblood whore. I almost killed Bella once before and now I find my wand hand becoming rather eager when Lucius is around. You and the mudblood have become fairly close as of late," he stated, stopping for a moment as if a sudden revelation had just occurred to him.

"Milord, we are not close in the terms of which you may be thinking."

"I'm well aware of that, Severus, which is why you are still standing here. I have found myself keeping Lucius away so as to prevent his unnecessary death at my own hand. However, I find that increasingly difficult and every time he's with the whore, whether I see them or not, I think of ways to kill the man that even push my own boundaries."

Severus had to use all of his training, from every single minute of being a spy, to keep from showing his shock.

"Milord, if what you're saying aptly describes how you feel, then I believe you're experiencing the rather common emotion of jealousy. When she is around anyone else that she may have an interest in, you feel those feelings more acutely."

The anger that had only recently abated became extremely evident once more. "Jealous! Need I remind you of who I am, Severus? Of what I have and what I'm to become? I am not jealous, nor do I have the inclination to become so." He spat the word as though it left a bad taste in his mouth.

"I'm afraid Milord, that I have no reason to suspect her of any wrong doing. A poison would have to be given orally and she has no contact with anything that you consume without your presence. A curse would require magic, which she is not allowed to use, and even wandlessly you would know if she did since your magics are shared. One of your trusted servants is with her at all times, leaving the chance to do something against you impossible."

A chair went flying across the room this time and his face once more began changing from one appearance to another as his control hung

in the balance. "SHE HAS DONE SOMETHING!" he screamed. "I have felt the effects for awhile now and," he added coldly before enunciating each of his next words, "I. Want. To. Know. What!"

It was then that the door opened and Hermione walked in slowly. Trepidation bathed her features as she quickly looked from Severus to Voldemort.

'Careful, Granger,' he said as he looked from her confused face to the angry wizard approaching her, 'he's very angry with you.'

'With me? What have I ...'

"Tell me, witch," he snarled in disgust as his face remained that of Voldemort, "exactly what you've done to me. How did you get a poison into my rooms? How were you able to curse me without the use of magic?"

"Excuse me? Milord, I'm afraid I don't understand what you mean," she said with a calm innocence, but her shock was evident.

"Of course not," he mocked. "It must have been someone else. How foolish of me to assume that it was you; you, the only one that it seems to have an effect with."

"Perhaps, Milord, she is telling the truth," Severus supplied, realizing how volatile this conversation was and hoping to keep the attention diverted from Hermione. His attempt worked, too well.

With a voice as cold as ice, Voldemort demanded as his hands waved between the three of them when needed. "How dare you accuse me? How dare you even suggest that I am wrong! I know she has done something, even if I have yet to discover what it is. She stays in my head, makes me rethink things I've been doing for decades all with just a look. She has gotten inside of me and twisted everything!"

If Severus was hoping for the best he was sorely disappointed when Voldemort pointed his wand at him and whispered, "Crucio!" once more.



Again, he found himself on the floor, withering in pain and refusing to scream out as his bones felt like they were on fire.

“STOP IT! JUST STOP IT!” he heard Hermione yell as she rushed to Voldemort and groaned at what he assumed the repercussions to be.

The physical pain stopped, but the vision his eyes met with when he looked up hurt far worse than any curse.

“HOW DARE YOU!” Voldemort suddenly screamed and, with both hands and the added strength of an anger unknown to most, he picked her up by the arms he had pinned to her side and bodily threw her into another table. With a loud crash and a sickening groan, the witch landed and didn’t move.

‘HERMIONE! Hermione are you alright? Why did you have to do that? Wake up, damn it!’ Severus yelled inside her head, hoping desperately to hear a snooty remark of any kind from the woman laying in a crumpled heap.

Suddenly, Severus was forgotten as Tom stalked to the table and looked down at Hermione. Blood was trickling down from her lip and her eyes were closed. Nothing appeared to be broken, but he could only tell so much as he watched her not moving, not speaking.

“That’s enough, witch,” he said quietly, all anger vanished from his voice and replaced by what appeared to be worry. He closed his eyes and shook his head as if trying to clear the foreign emotions and looked back down at her. “I said get up!” he said louder, unfamiliar panic gripping at his chest and making him grab her arms and shake her roughly. “Obey me when I speak and GET UP!” he yelled, shaking her even harder.

He almost dropped her in surprise when she suddenly groaned. Her eyes fluttered open and she looked at him cautiously. “Tom,” he heard her whisper, his chest constricting once more when she closed her eyes and her body went limp again.

Laying her down, he rounded back on Severus. "Do something! Make her get up or I'll kill you where you stand!"

Trying desperately not to roll his eyes at the dramatics, Severus took the much desired opportunity and knelt down beside Hermione. Drawing his wand and saying several incantations, he watched as she opened her eyes and feebly made to stand up. Moving him out of the way, she shakily made her way to her feet and glared at Tom.

"Now, tell me what it is you've done to me," he snarled, but the previous melodrama had ceased.

"I have done nothing to you, Milord, nor would I ever," she said calmly as a faint grin suddenly teased at the corners of her mouth in realization.

"I don't believe you!"

Tom threw his hand up in the direction of a bookcase and watched in small triumph as his wand made it explode, followed quickly by a small, round table, and a window. Her grin increasing at his half-hearted attempt, Hermione walked confidently up to him and put her hand on his wand arm, slowly stopping the curses and bringing his arm down to a safe level.

He stared at her intently, his eyes moving from her face to her hand, and back again as she readied herself to bare her soul. "Perhaps, Milord," she said with a hint of amusement, "you find yourself liking me a bit more than you had imagined possible. It is for that reason, and that reason alone, that you think of me when your thoughts should be elsewhere. That you hear my voice when I'm not near, or feel my touch from another room. Perhaps it is for that reason, that you smell my scent, allow your dreams to be filled with my presence, and desire my company above that of others."

"You've bewitched me," he accused quietly, his appearance swiftly changing to that of Tom and the room quieting around them. "How else would you know what you've done to me?"

“Because I suffer from the same affliction. Wanting you. So close to loathing that the two intermingle. The part of us both that still remains human seeks out the other as they twine around like two trees sharing the same branches. Perhaps, Milord, our magics have been trying to tell us that we belong to one another.”

He roughly grabbed her wrist and pulled her sharply, slamming her body against his chest. “Tell me, has bringing the great Dark Lord to his knees amused you, witch?” he asked quietly, staring into her face. His demeanor suddenly changed, however. “You belong to me, witch. You are mine now, and only mine. You have enchanted me in ways that shouldn’t be possible and I won’t let you leave. Say it, witch. Say you belong to me!”

Hermione watched flashes of her life in those few seconds between his demand and her answer; watched scenes as though on screen at a muggle movie and didn’t much like what she saw. She could see her past and the people that were no longer her future, see as her best friends had begun to turn her away. Her focus became solely that of Lucius. She saw herself falling for him, only to be reminded repeatedly of his coldness each and every time that he hurt her. Then she saw Remus, saw as she imagined his beautiful face when the killing curse struck his body, only to later learn it wasn’t true, and she knew then that Lucius did not love her, probably never did. But she worried about their pain and suffering the most. She felt each and every time Severus was tortured, and knew that her feelings for Lucius would not allow her to stand idly by and watch him be cursed either.

“Will you swear to me that you’ll never hurt Severus again, or Lucius?” she asked calmly. “If so, I’ll come to you willingly and no one need ever know you were willing to break your own rules of slave ownership. As I understand it, I can go to you with Lucius’ blessing, but you aren’t supposed to take me away.”

A wicked smile graced his features. “If that is your desire, then I will make it so. However, no one is to know of this agreement. Your death will be mine if the others find out I made any deals with you. Now say it!” he snarled the last bit and she quivered inside.

‘Granger? What are you doing? DO NOT DO THIS! Death is better than what he’s asking of you. Hermione, no!’

She heard his screams as they tore through her mind, but when she looked at Tom she knew, she knew what she had to do, what her mind and the darkness were willing her to do, and she smiled serenely. Knowing this was different than the other time he made her proclaim such things, but not understanding the full impact her words would have, she whispered, “I’m yours.”

He took her lips with his own, greedily, full of hunger and passion; licking the blood from her bottom lip as he assaulted her mouth, her body, and even her heart. His fingers, still wrapped around her wrist, began to glow a bright green and she felt the searing heat from his hand.

Within moments, he had her pressed against the wall, her breasts pushed forcefully into his chest as his mouth continued to devour hers. He lifted her easily and she wrapped her legs around his waist, held up only by the wall behind her and gasping in surprise when their clothes suddenly disappeared. He entered her roughly, pounding her small body into the wall repeatedly while one hand held her mouth to his and the other continued to hold her burning wrist at her waist. The air around them crackled with magic and pain seared through her wrist once more.

When she broke the kiss and stared down at her wrist, she could see his hand glowing and gasped in realization when she looked back up at him. He released her arm, slowing his motions while taking her hand gently and bringing it up to eye-level. There, wrapped around her delicate wrist like a bracelet, was the Dark Mark. This mark wasn’t like the others, no snake from a skull crudeness; this mark was of two snakes, wrapping around one another without stop--without beginning or end they curled into and around the other.

“You will remain with me from now on,” he said softly, his body slowing almost to a stop inside of her. “You are mine, with all the protection and privileges that this mark entails,” he added quietly. “My followers will respect you and you will aide them where needed, but you will only lie with me. I haven’t not taken a slave from Lucius, I

have made another follower. You belong to me now, tim molisje, as you've finally come into your name."

"I am not your weakness, Milord, but your strength," she said, surprising him that she knew the name he had been secretly keeping from her.

"How long have you known?" he asked, as he stilled his motions completely and narrowed his eyes at her.

"Not long, Milord. Only long enough to realize that together, you and I are even more powerful than we are apart." She began working her hips, her body begging for friction.

"It would appear so."

They both became so engrossed in each other that neither noticed when Severus slipped quietly from the room. Tom began to take her roughly once more and within moments, they were both screaming their ecstasy into each others necks.

"There are things from my room that I need, Milord, if I may." She waved her hand and her original muggle clothing returned to her suddenly clean body.

He appraised her for several moments before speaking. "You have two hours," he said softly, a finger gently caressing her cheek. "Two hours to say goodbye to Lucius, in any way you choose, and to gather your things. Leave your muggle clothing there, I forbid you to wear such things any longer."

Hermione slowly walked to the door, casting one last glance at Tom before walking swiftly from the room and back to Lucius.

A/N: Chapter 21/28 at your service my loves! Don't forget the Quill to Parchment awards--you can vote until April 22nd. Awardsdotquilltoparchmentdotcom. Also, thank you all for your wonderful reviews (and the comments on Darkest Desires as well)!

"Save your breath, witch, Severus has already been to see me. I must say, however, I am rather surprised to see you here," Lucius said coldly, keeping his back to her as she entered the room.

"Hello, Lucius," she responded quietly.

What was she supposed to say to him, 'I could have loved you, given the chance. I think I may have already?' That way he could mock her relentlessly and break the tiny sliver that was left of her heart. Hardly an option, she mused, wiping away the tears from her closed eyes. In the next instant, she found herself wrapped in his comforting embrace; tears falling from her eyes as she lost the battle to hold them in any longer.

"You stupid, stupid girl," he muttered against her hair, his hands slowly rubbing her back. "Why would you ever do something so foolish? Do you have any idea what this means?"

She pushed him away forcefully. "Of course I know what it means!" she said angrily. "What would you have done, Lucius? Would you have told him you were sorry, but taking the Mark wasn't exactly what you wanted? He would have killed me instead. Perhaps that would have been a better option, would have made you happier, but instead I made an agreement with him. I sold my soul to the devil himself and I can't get it back now." Her anger deflated somewhat, but Lucius' was only starting to grow.

"Better option! You think that is what I want? You believe I wish you dead? Have you forgotten everything?"

"Everything?"

His lips crashed down on hers, comforting her wounded heart if only for a moment, and she felt herself giving in to him; giving him what she wanted, what she had always wanted.

His hands wound through her hair, cradling her head as if he was afraid she would leave him and, without her consent, her own arms wound around his waist, a soft moan fell from her lips. He picked her up, slamming her small body into the wall as he wrapped her legs around his waist and pulled her shirt up over her head. Allowing his eyes to roam her uncovered upper body, he groaned inwardly before attacking her neck and shoulders. Her hands drew his head harder against her heated flesh until he grabbed them both and pinned them to the wall above them with one hand, his other skimming down her arm, the side of her black, lace covered bra, and down to cup her arse as she moaned into his mouth again.

“Gods, witch, what you do to me.”

“I am simply a whore, Lucius, nothing more,” she replied, breath hitching as she turned her head to the side.

All of Lucius’ movements stilled in that second and he gently trapped her chin between his fingers, drawing her face back around to look at him. “You were never my whore, Hermione. I don’t know what you were, what you’re no longer allowed to become, but it was never a whore.”

A single tear slipped down her cheek and he brushed it away with the pad of his thumb before leaning in and gently taking her lips with his own. Cradling her body close to his, he carried her over and laid her softly on the bed, looking at her flushed face and the desire she tried to keep from her eyes. His hands slid from her shoulders and down her breasts, across her taut belly and to the waistband of her jeans. Opening the snap, he slowly slid them down her body, all thoughts of the Dark Lord having just possessed her fleeing from his mind as his erection began to throb at the sight of her. He slipped her knickers from her body and easily undid the clasp of her bra as well, allowing it to join the discarded clothing on the floor.

With a snap of his fingers, his own robes were gone, leaving him naked and exposed to her hungry gaze. “If this is not what you want, tell me now,” he said softly as he drew up the length of her body, poised above her opening, but staring into her eyes.

"I want you, Lucius. Whatever that makes me, I can't stop wanting you."

He entered her slowly, deliberately being as gentle as he could with the witch he suddenly realized he loved beyond all others. His son was flesh and blood, important to him in ways it was hard to explain, but even he had become something that Lucius couldn't understand. This witch, his witch, was love and compassion, honor and bravery, intelligence and beauty--she made him want to be a better person, but he knew it was too late for that now. He had lost her to the man he swore to serve no matter what, the man he was betraying in order to protect his son, who had hurt the woman he had fallen for. And she had saved him. His thrusts became harder, faster when she mewed and her nails scratched along his back, silently begging him for her release.

"It doesn't matter," he said suddenly.

Breathlessly she asked, "What doesn't?"

"That you took the Dark Mark." At her confused look, he added seriously, "Make no mistake, Hermione, you belong to me, and, regardless of the outcome of this war, you will always belong to me." He began thrusting into her slowly, watching as her face turned from indignation to agreement and then to desire. "You are tainted by me," he said, kissing along her neck even as he opened her legs further and his fingers ghosted over her clit, "you will never find another who can invade your mind, your body, so effortlessly. You crave me as I crave you. And, you would die for me as I...as I would die for you."

She screamed her release and indignation at his words and he thrust into her once more, claiming her body and soul as his own and hating the world for what it had now taken from them. He collapsed on top of her, both physically and emotionally spent, as he tried to regulate his breathing and his heart rate.

"Lucius," she said finally, "I have to go now. He's calling for me and I can't be late."



Lucius rolled off of her, wishing to keep her locked up safe with him, but instead, watching as she snapped her fingers to clothe her body and gathered some of her belongings, before leaving him forever.

"We can't be together any longer, Lucius. I'm sorry. Maybe one day you'll understand. For now, this is for the best."

"The best?" he quipped coldly, knowing she had to go, but hating it nonetheless.

"Don't." He clamped his mouth shut, not at the word, but at the torn look in her eyes as she walked back over to him. "I could have loved you, Lucius," she laughed, a self-mocking sound that he hated to hear, "perhaps I did. But I'm not allowed to any longer. He has taken everything from me until he is the only one I have left."

With that, she turned and walked away from him, his lover no more.

"You are late!" Voldemort snarled when she entered the room, arms laden with books and her shrunken belongings in her pocket.

"Forgive me, Milord. I stopped..."

They were interrupted by a knock at the door.

"We will discuss this later. I am most displeased with you. Hours into giving you what so many would kill to have and you have already forgotten your place." Turning his attention back to the door he answered, "Enter!"

"They are having a meeting tonight, Milord. Would you like for me to attend?" Severus asked quietly, bowing before his master as he felt the tension radiating through the room.

"Rise, Severus," Voldemort commanded. "I do not think it wise for you to miss meetings this soon after being accepted. You shall attend."

"I agree, Milord," Severus replied, quietly walking towards the two. Hermione was standing by the wall, her fists clenched while Voldemort sat in a chair before her. It was obvious he had interrupted

something unpleasant and he felt reluctant to leave her alone again. "I will need to give them something, Milord."

"Ah, yes, information," he said, moving his cold gaze from his loyal servant and allowing it to settle on Hermione. "Tell me, Severus, do they still try to protect parents of Mudbloods who have been targeted by me?"

"I believe so, Milord," he answered warily.

"Milord?" Hermione asked suddenly, slight panic written along her face.

Voldemort ignored her and continued speaking to Severus as though she hadn't spoken. "Excellent! Inform them that their Mudblood has displeased me and, as punishment, she will pay with her parents' lives."

"Milord!" Hermione screeched.

"Control yourself, witch!" he snarled, clearly angry at her outburst.

"Milord, I cannot assure you they will attempt to rescue the Grangers."

Voldemort looked at Hermione's stricken face, but said in a controlled voice, "Let us hope that they do. The attacks will occur at half past six tomorrow evening; you," he said, turning back to Severus, "will tell them six sharp. The entire street will be attacked. I feel certain that the half-breed will save them along with the other Muggles."

"I believe you are right, Milord," he answered. With a wave of their master's hand, he was dismissed.

"Oh, and, Severus..."

"Yes, Milord?" he replied, stopping at the door and cautiously turning around.

“When my Death Eaters meet the Order, they are allowed to kill, torture, and capture at will. You and Lucius may lead the mission tomorrow. Take whomever you wish to assist you. However,” he added thoughtfully, “if you meet the half-breed, he is to be captured only. Keep your cover and do not allow them to know it is you.” He tapped his long fingers on the table for a moment. “The wolf may very well come in handy yet.”

“Of course, Milord.”

‘You’ll keep him away, right, Severus?’

‘Speaking to me now, Granger?’

‘Please!’

Severus sighed, then turned and left the room without answering her.

Voldemort turned his attention back to Hermione. “I have given them a half hour’s head start. What they choose to do with it is up to them.”

“Is your plan to kill my parents?” Hermione’s voice was even, but inside she was shaking. For a few, brief moments she had let herself believe the man before her was someone more than just the most evil wizard alive, and now she was being harshly reminded of the truth. He didn’t have friends, nor did he have the capacity to love or care, or to even show compassion, but his abilities, his commands, and his intelligence captivated in her ways she’d never thought possible and she hated herself for it even as she desired the man.

“The Order will reach them first. Otherwise, allow this to be a lesson to you,” he said softly, standing and slowly walking around behind her. His hands grazed her neck gently before moving to her shoulders where his grip tightened painfully. “You will not defy me and get away with it, witch. You were very generously given two hours; more than adequate, I feel, and yet, you took longer.”

“Milord, I only stopped by the library to add the finishing touches to my research. I meant no...” She was silenced by his painful grip sliding to her throat.

Bending down, he snarled into her ear. "I do not care what you meant, pet, only that you disregarded a direct order. For all I'm aware at the moment, you could have stayed with Lucius, my own servant, the entire time."

"No, Milord, I..."

"I believe," he said coldly, yet heat coursed through her body, "that I will have to fuck you, abuse your body to the point where you no longer remember his name. Maybe then you will remember not to stray."

"I believe you are right, Milord," she answered with a desire laden voice.

He stood up abruptly and turned away from her. "But it must wait. We have a meeting to attend and you have some enlightening to do. I have already briefed my Death Eaters on your situation and I am certain you have told Lucius. Do you feel prepared to prove to them what you have proven to me in our latest conversations?"

"Of course, Milord," she answered confidently, standing up to join him as he walked through the door.

They arrived in a circular room minutes later, in a part of the Manor she had never seen before. Centered in the room was a long table, ten chairs lining one side and ten on the other, with a larger chair at the far end. Most chairs were already occupied and the chatter died immediately when they entered. The Death Eaters stood, showing their respect to their Master with bowed heads and downcast eyes.

"Sit, my servants," he commanded of his inner circle as he took his seat and motioned Hermione to the one to his left. Severus sat across from her on his right, and she refused to allow herself to look for Lucius, but she could almost feel his gaze on her skin.

Shocking most, Voldemort looked at a burly man, his face scarred and his eyes cold. "Desdan, voice your concerns now so that we may continue with the meeting uninterrupted."

"Milord, please forgive my saying so, but I did not think Mudbloods were allowed to join your ranks." His voice was strong but he was obviously wishing he were anywhere other than in the room at the moment.

"Ah, you are right for once, Desdan, but information has come to my attention recently that may change what we have believed to be true for many years."

"Milord?" Another voice came, but Hermione couldn't see who from her side of the table had spoken. She avoided looking around more for fear of catching Lucius' gaze; his declaration from earlier still shifting through her mind.

Voldemort stood and began pacing the room, speaking to his Death Eaters and holding their complete attention. "Hermione Granger is a very accomplished witch. No one who knows what she has done could argue that fact. I daresay she could win a duel against most of you even without the use of her wand. She has been deemed the most intelligent witch of her generation and even I must concur with that sentiment. So, I ask you, does that sound like someone born to Muggles to you?"

Hermione was blushing slightly at his high praise and kept her focus on her hands folded on the table.

"No, Milord, but are you suggesting the Muggles who raised her are not her parents?"

"A Pureblood?"

"Not at all. Hermione, if you will," Voldemort said, gesturing her to his side. "Tell them of the research you've been doing since I've permitted you use of the library. A place, I might add, that it would do most of you good to spend your time."

"Of course, Milord," she said, smiling up at him. The surrounding Death Eaters had enough sense not to comment about the look on either of their faces. "The Dark Lord and I have discussed

Muggleborns on several occasions,” she added casually, as though speaking with their Master was not something to fear. “I must admit to agreeing with him. How could magic come from Muggles? People who know very little, or have no defenses, and can certainly not compare themselves to witches and wizards. The only answer we could come up with is that it simply can’t. Muggles are nothing compared to magical beings. So, there must be another reason. At first, I thought perhaps so called Muggleborns were a byproduct of Squibs, but in all the research I’ve compiled, I have yet to find anything that proved my theory one way or another.”

She was interrupted by the whispering of two Death Eaters at the far end of the table. “As if we would believe a filthy little Mudblood when it comes to magic,” they scoffed.

“SILENCE!” the Dark Lord bellowed. “She is now a fellow Death Eater and will be treated as such. If you have a problem with that, I will deal with you myself. As for you two,” he said as he looked at the two scared wizards, “I will take care of your outburst later.”

The room quickly stilled once more and they all turned their attention back to Hermione. Thankful she didn’t hex the offending men, she took a deep breath and tried to continue. Without realizing it, she met Lucius’ gaze, but he only nodded his head as if waiting for her to continue and she felt her confidence bolstered somewhat.

“As I was saying, there wasn’t a significant amount written that would explain the reasoning for powerful Muggleborns. However, by looking back to the days of the Hogwarts founders, I found the reason.” She began pacing the room, much as Voldemort had done before her, feeling for the first time as though her life were back to normal and she was merely lecturing Harry and Ron. It didn’t matter that her real audience was a group of Death Eaters, she was in her element and truly happy for the first time in a long while.

“It would appear that during the time of Salazar Slytherin and Godric Gryffindor’s biggest arguments, a wager of sorts was made. Gryffindor claimed he could instill more power into a regular Muggle than Slytherin could take away from a magical child. For the next 50 years, the number of Squibs and Muggleborns increased by ten

percent. It is thought that the more powerful Muggleborns carry residual powers from Gryffindor himself.”

“Are you saying that you are a descendant of Godric Gryffindor? Or that squibs are descendants of Salazar Slytherin?”

“Preposterous!” someone else added.

More complaints and exclamations rose around the table as the Death Eaters threatened to hex Hermione for her belligerence; a rather ill-advised notion after the Dark Lord’s last statement.

The Dark Lord raised his hand and they all quieted immediately. “Had you listened,” he said, his voice hard and degrading, “you would know that she said nothing about descendants, only a transfer of power from one Mudblood to the next. Mudbloods are still Mudbloods, however, but some may be more valuable than we ever assumed. All great wizards have found worthy witches in which to bear their heirs and Gryffindor, no matter how noble and honorable he claimed himself to be, was no different. He only took half-blood and pureblood witches into his bed. On the other hand, Salazar, with all his pureblooded ideology, is known to have taken a Mudblood witch who bore him a son.”

“And what of you, Milord? You are surely the greatest wizard alive, will you find a witch to bear your son?”

Voldemort looked at the man for several long moments, making him begin questioning his own sanity for asking such a thing from his Master, while the rest waited on bated breath for his answer. Voldemort, however, was wondering if this was a question they had all been asking themselves and marveling in the idea that they would want him to pass along his greatness. He shot a quick glance at Hermione, knowing they were all watching his every move as he staked a claim publicly on the witch beside him. His gaze swept meaningfully over Lucius before he looked back at the follower.

“Don’t be ignorant, Yaxley, I have found the witch to give me an heir and we shall celebrate that birth with as much gusto as we will celebrate the defeat over those that oppose me now.”

“Milord! A Mudblood is surely not worthy enough to bear your child. You can’t mean her!”

“Ah, Bella. I did at one time consider you. My only female Death Eater, intelligent, of good breeding stock, married to one of my servants who would not interfere, and yet, I found you lacking.” He turned to the room at large, ignoring the look of rage that she quickly masked. “You are dismissed with this new knowledge. We shall begin looking for Mudbloods who might show their worthiness to our cause. Those attending the mission tomorrow, see Severus. Lucius, stay behind.”

Lucius kept his seat, eyes looking only at the table before him and not at the witch leaving the room. He inhaled her scent, remembered the feel of her body next to his, but he wouldn’t allow himself to look at her for fear of a retribution that may come anyway.

“She is mine now, Lucius,” Voldemort spoke softly. “She no longer belongs to you. As a Death Eater and not a slave, the choice was hers.”

“She told me, Milord,” he said, meeting his Master’s eyes and hoping the bitterness was kept from his voice. “I’m afraid I could not hope to begin to compare to you, nor would I wish to do so. She is worthy of you, Milord, I have no doubt.”

“Then we understand each other perfectly,” he replied coldly. “Speak to her only as you would your fellow Death Eaters, but touch her again, Lucius, and I will see you dead.”

“Of course, Milord.”

“Tomorrow, you will have first pick of the slaves. Surely that generous offer will make up for your loss.”

“Thank you, Milord. You are most kind.”

“You may go for now.”



Lucius stood and left the room, knowing that no matter who was captured tomorrow, they would never compare to his witch. He found himself dreading, for the first time in his life, going on a mission in which he was readily allowed to kill and torture Muggles.

Hermione stood in the hallway, completely oblivious to the goings on around her as she contemplated what had been said at the end of the meeting; even days later she couldn't stop thinking about it. An heir? The heir of the Dark Lord carried in her, a Mudblood? What bothered her the most was not that the most feared wizard of their time had chosen her, but that she felt proud of the fact. Shouldn't she be concerned, horrified, or any number of emotions that most normal people would feel? All she could feel was pride and honor that he would choose her over all others, even if the possibility of becoming pregnant was nearly nil.

Severus had continued to supply her with potions, and she was almost certain one was a contraceptive potion. She had taken them without fail, even though she no longer needed them since her body had adjusted nicely to the Dark Lord, but she was sure there had been no way to continue taking the potions now that she was staying in his rooms.

Sighing heavily, she continued to walk down the hallway and think to herself. She had been forced into many situations in the last several months, but this was the most difficult by far and she was not entirely sure she was ready for it. It appeared to her that perhaps Lucius felt the same way about her that she felt about him. She wasn't in love with him, that would require a mutual meeting of the minds and hearts and not in the capacity of being held prisoner, but the possibility was certainly there and she was sure she loved him in many other ways. Now, however, she was forbidden to feel that way unless she wished to risk their very lives. Tom, no matter how gentle he seemed at times, was a very jealous man and jealousy and power would never go well together.

Which led her to her next problem; her hatred for Lord Voldemort was weakening. She hated what he stood for, what he had done, and hated mostly that, as Tom, she felt she was falling for him as well. How could she do that? How could she betray all that she had known and aid the man who had threatened to kill her own parents! Severus believed she was working with him and Lucius to stop Voldemort, but even she wasn't sure about that now. The power and darkness she had been fighting were so intoxicating that each time she used them, she felt as though part of her were growing stronger and taking away

any signs of weakness she had had before. She felt possessed every time he took her body and that in itself was a feeling she couldn't put words to. Lucius was an incredible and passionate lover, but Tom was a powerful, intense lover.

Maybe it was just the darkness, or maybe it was being betrayed by all those she loved, but whatever the reason, she wanted more of the power, more of the darkness that made all the sad, lonely feelings leave until she was left with nothing but the feeling of completion. The hardest part of it all was knowing that Harry had willingly left her behind. That had been something unexpected and it was the proverbial straw that had broken the camel's back. Certainly he had fought against the idea, even argued some, as she had seen in his mind that night, but he had still left her there. Forgiving him would be easy, she knew, if only he would show some sign of remorse, some sign that he was still the man she knew him to be. The darkness bubbled as she delved deeper into her memories. She could feel it grow stronger inside her each day and fighting its effects was becoming harder and harder until she knew one day it would completely take her over. She wasn't entirely sure that was such a bad thing.

Voices caught her attention in the library and she slowed her steps to listen at the door as she peered in.

"Is this true, Rodolphus?" she heard Bellatrix Lestrange ask her husband. "Were you sleeping with my sister, too?" Hermione noticed the calculating look that Bellatrix gave her husband before pulling a worn piece of parchment from her robes and handing it to him. She immediately recognized it as the letter Lucius had given his sister-in-law the morning of her own torture. Hiding her gasp of surprise and her anger at the memory, she continued to listen, unnoticed by both.

Rodolphus read through it quickly, before shaking his head and chuckling softly and Hermione realized with a start that she rather liked the sound. "Yes, it's true." Upon his wife's enraged look, he added, "Every time you lay with our Master, I had your sister. But it was just that, sex. Words of love were never spoken and I never thought her to be as weak and pathetic as this. Why the sudden questioning? It's been quite awhile since her death."

"I don't know. You've been gone a lot since then and I just..." Then, without warning, she asked, "Do you want the Mudblood as well?"

He walked calmly over to his wife, loving her jealousy and the way she defended her family, but more so the way she would give in to him no matter what.

"Narcissa's dead," Bellatrix said softly when his hand caressed her cheek.

"Yes," he said with a sinister grin as he tilted her head up. "So tell me, wife, why you are really so angry?"

"I thought it was because of the Mudblood; I even convinced our Master to allow me to torture her. Then Lucius stormed in and handed me that," she said, gesturing to the parchment, "and the Dark Lord became angry and tortured me instead."

"Are you pouting, Bella? Are you honestly pouting like a child?" he asked, amused.

"I am not! I was just certain it was the Mudblood because Lucius had been tripping all over her. And now she's one of us and I suppose I feel guilty for my actions against her."

"Tripping over? I hardly think that was an accurate assessment. Lucius Malfoy is one of the coldest men I know, it's one of the reasons I like him. He enjoys...enjoyed fucking his slave because she is more than just easy on the eyes and has yet to become broken like so many others. I don't think you should read more into his affections than that."

"Perhaps," she mumbled as he began kissing her and running his hands along her body. Hermione was surprised to find that the cold, crazed man was rather passionate and suave.

"As you have been told, it was Rabastan she loved, not me. But you're right, the Mudblood is one of us now and you should consider befriending her before it is too late."

"I suppose you're right, love. Do you want her?"

Holding her close, he replied softly, "That is a rather moot point, is it not? Any man that touches her now, or even allows the thoughts to enter his mind, will be killed on site by our Master himself. She looked so evil when she killed the filthy Muggle nights ago that I believe we were all drawn to her."

"She had to be threatened with death herself to do it, if you remember. Do you feel she is worthy enough to carry his heir?"

"We shall see in time. Come now, witch, we have hours before the mission," he growled, nipping roughly along her neck.

Bella moaned loudly. "Yes, we do."

"Let us go home. I'll even let you pick out our toy for yourself this time."

Her eyes sparkled with manic glee. "Let us go, husband. I have a sudden desire for a very sharp knife."

Hermione felt herself fade into the shadows as the couple left the room and headed down the hall, completely oblivious to their eavesdropper. So, Bella felt a bit guilty did she? Pity that, it would make Hermione's revenge only slightly less uplifting. She hated to admit it, but the way the man had just manipulated Bella made her believe that Rodolphus had serious potential, and the comment about a sharp knife intrigued her as well. Briefly, she thought of Neville and felt a twinge of guilt, but it didn't remain long and she slowly walked into the library to immerse herself fully into her one true comfort--books. In books, she could forget that she had lost a bit of herself that night she took someone's life. Was he married? A father? Did it even matter? The choice had been her life or his, and she had chosen her own.

Days melted into weeks and it was soon clear to all that Hermione had been accepted into the fold; whether she exactly fit in or not remained to be seen. She was never seen without their Master,

however, and so they treated her like a new member of their dark organization and counted themselves lucky to have her intelligence on their side.

Severus had begun pointing out that she was going too far, all but pleading with her to stop accepting the darkness so easily and to try fighting it more. His worries were not baseless, as she had in fact killed a Muggle man only two days ago. She had been forced to entertain the Dark Lord by killing an unknown man with the threat of death herself if she did not comply. Although her heart wasn't in it, the curse itself was strong and the effect instantaneous; she had pleased Voldemort, even though she lost a bit more of herself that night when the stranger lay dead before her.

The recent missions had apparently been very large successes, with only a few casualties from the Dark Lord's ranks. Severus had told her that Harry had come to defend her parents, and had also went on the other smaller mission they had just yesterday, shocking most of the Death Eaters and those in the Order as well. He had also told her that her parents and Remus had escaped the attack on her house, and that her parents were currently residing at Grimmauld Place. That had been a week ago. The latest mission had been earlier that day and she hadn't heard from Severus since then.

The party for the mission concerning the Muggles captured on her parents' street had been delayed while others healed, but Lucius had already been given his new slave and Hermione had heard many rumors regarding her. Apparently she was a young, blond woman who was deemed 'unworthy, but fuckable.' Hermione only wished the darkness prevented her from feelings of jealousy. She had been with Tom nightly since moving into his rooms, but that did not mean she wanted Lucius free to be with others. She and the Dark Lord had shared meals, shared his bed, and even shared books and thoughts. He was still the Dark Lord, however, which left him unable to share his general affections, if they even existed. At first, she had wondered what it would be like to wake up next to him each morning; what she found instead, was that he slept little and was always awake long before her. He had told her that, since his resurrection, he felt the ability to sleep eluded him most of the time. Apparently, most of his

thinking occurred at night and he woke her occasionally to discuss certain tactics and such.

All day Tom kept repeatedly telling her that he had a surprise this evening and couldn't wait to share it with her. It would appear her 'true test' was coming tonight with the party. So, dressed in tight, red dress robes and looking every bit the queen that she was becoming, she was forced to attend the party or face his wrath.

The Death Eaters were dressed in their robes, most recently returned from something that had them all more excited than she had seen them since her own capture and she wondered briefly who they had captured this time. The Dark Lord himself was dressed articulately in black dress robes that, had his appearance not been so ghastly, would have had him fitting in with the most esteemed members of polite society. Her eyes widened slightly when she saw Lucius, dressed beautifully in gray robes, but with a drawn, saddened look on his face. His slave sat demurely by his side, watching her with a scathing look, masked slightly by curiosity.

She noticed Severus standing near Lucius. Ophelia was with him and Hermione felt a slight pang of jealousy when she felt how happy Severus seemed to be. They had only been together a short time, but it was becoming more and more obvious to her that the young Order member had captured more than just her new master's attention, even though he showed no outward signs. And the way she smiled at him made Hermione nauseous.

'Granger, there's something you need to know.' Severus broke into her mind, but as she was getting ready to respond, the Dark Lord stood from beside her and addressed his followers.

"Silence!" he hissed and they all immediately obeyed. "Welcome once again to our little celebration. It appears we are having more and more of those these days; a very good sign that the end is nearing and our greatest rewards will soon be at hand." He turned to Hermione, offering her his hand and bringing her to stand beside him. "I have a present for you, my pet," he hissed softly. "Someone you haven't seen in a long time wishes to say 'hello' to you." He took a

couple of steps away from her before saying sharply, "Bring in the wolf."

Hermione's breath caught in her throat as she watched two Death Eaters walk through the door, dragging a beaten and bloody Remus Lupin between them.

'I tried to stop them, Granger. They went back to the house and others were waiting for them. I did not know he would do something so foolish, but this is not the worst of it,' she heard Severus say but chose to ignore him as she kept her eyes trained on Remus.

"Come along, half-breed; it is time to get what you so richly deserve."

"Cursing me for life not enough for you, Greyback?" Remus growled, his throat obviously raw and Hermione could only imagine what horrors he had been put through. Judging by his tattered and bloody clothing, it was probably worse than anything she was imagining.

She watched in horror as Greyback stopped walking, balling his fist and punching Remus hard in the stomach, making him double over in pain. "Hardly," he spat. "I gave you a gift and you refuse to accept it for what it is."

Remus didn't respond, his eyes suddenly locked solely on the wizard who had just stepped into his path. Anger and hatred radiated from him as Greyback pushed him roughly onto his knees. The others began forming a circle around their surprise guest as they murmured in excitement.

"That is enough foolishness from you both," Voldemort said coldly, shooting a scathing look at Greyback who slinked back into the circle of now quiet spectators. "Remus Lupin--werewolf, intelligent man, powerful, and leader of the Order of the Phoenix--you have been brought here tonight to make a choice."

He began walking around the room, his body no longer covering Hermione from sight, and Remus' eyes widened in shock when he saw her. His shock was quickly replaced with compassion and he



greedily drank in the sight of her standing before him, uninjured, as he gave her a small smile.

“Beautiful, is she not?” Voldemort hissed from behind him.

Eyes still on Hermione, Remus responded icily, “Yes, along with kind, caring, brave, and intelligent. There is nothing you can tell me about her that I don’t already know.”

Voldemort laughed, a cold, mirthless laugh that made his Death Eaters shudder slightly. “Most of which has made her a pleasant addition to my ranks.”

He noticed the surprise in Remus’ hitched breath, along with how Hermione averted her eyes slightly. “Did I tell you something you did not know? I was certain Severus would have told you. Yes, Hermione has chosen to side with me; a very wise decision, do you not agree?”

“Hardly.”

“Oh, come now, half-breed...Remus,” he corrected himself, walking around once more, “Surely you don’t mean that.” Without waiting for Remus to respond to his mocking, Voldemort began speaking directly to his Death Eaters as Hermione and Remus stared at each other. “Over two decades ago, almost three now, there was a group of four very promising Hogwarts students. They were smart, cunning, unafraid of breaking the rules, and quite Slytherin in their actions. I overlooked their Gryffindor sorting and asked them to join me, to join us. Even when James Potter took a Mudblood as his wife, I offered to spare her life if they pledged their loyalty to me, and yet, three times they refused me. Only one came willingly, isn’t that right, Wormtail?”

“Yes, Master, I came to you; betrayed them all for you, Master,” he simpered from the circle as he knelt before his master.

“I wouldn’t brag about it, Pettigrew,” Remus spat hatefully. “You wouldn’t have been half of what you were without us. Just look at you now.”

Voldemort and Hermione both smiled their agreement before he continued. "So, again I ask you, Remus Lupin, will you join me? I will forgive your past transgressions and perhaps allow you to have a bit of fun with your old friend."

Wormtail's eyes widened in horror, but no one spoke as they waited for his answer.

"If it is a choice between you and death, Voldemort, I choose death."

Outraged whispers of 'he dares' and 'the name' swept through the circle of followers, but Voldemort held up a hand and they stilled instantly.

"No less than what I expected. Pity," he replied quietly.

He started walking around the room then, looking upon his followers as he spoke. "There are many of you who believe the Mudblood should prove her worth. The Muggle's death does not seem to be enough for some of you and I have been reluctant to allow another display due to the lack of an adequate subject. Although my word is absolute, as a considerate ruler, I understand the desire many of you feel for her to prove herself worthy of our kind." He slowly came to stand behind Hermione. Her gaze was locked on Remus' and she found it impossible to hide her emotions; how much she cared for the beaten wizard was written clearly in her eyes.

"However," he continued softly, "I believe I have found a test worthy of her. This half-breed," he spat disgustedly, all traces of politeness gone, "has been both mentor and friend to her in the past. Is there a more worthy choice than that?" he asked rhetorically. No one dared answer, but all thought Harry Potter would be her true test.

Voldemort moved his hands to her shoulders, noticing the way she stiffened slightly. His appearance as Voldemort was one she was slowly getting used to, but she no longer had a choice. Her game was over and she belonged to him. Speaking to her, he stared at Remus. "Curse him, my worthy pet. Make him feel all the pain that you felt when the Order betrayed you."

Remus looked ready, kneeling solid before her as Severus asked her what she was willing to do. Tears pooled in her eyes and she raised her hand slowly, only to have it drop limply at her side. Shaking her head, she whispered, "I...I can't, Milord."

Anger radiated from him and before she realized it, she was thrown to the ground and screams of pain and agony fell from her mouth, the darkness not holding it off as her emotions overwhelmed her, and he took full advantage of her weakness.

No one saw Severus flicking his wand at Lucius when he made to rush forward, nor did they see him clutch his own chest as her pain became his through their bond.

"You bastard! Leave her alone!" Remus screamed, trying to rise only to be forced down by Voldemort's wand when he lifted the curse against Hermione.

"Surely you understand that disobeying an order must not go unpunished. She will do as she's told or suffer the consequences as would all my followers."

Remus looked at Hermione as she rose to her feet and bowed her head, anger and disappointment flashing through him when he saw the mark around her wrist, but he suddenly understood what Severus had been saying...Hermione had gotten herself in too deep. He knew he was going to die, probably before the night was over, but he also knew he owed it to her to help as much as possible. She still didn't know the worst way in which he had failed her.

He looked up coldly and snarled, "Punish your own whore, Voldemort?"

The soft hiss of his answer carried steadily over the angry whispers. "Whores are easily replaced. I expect more from her."

"I could have told you otherwise, long ago," Remus spat. "It is because of her," he added, knowing the low blow would anger her, "that her own lover went to my wife."

He looked up at her, trying to convey accusations and dislike, and was relieved to notice that it was working. Her cheeks were flushing, her eyes flashing, and he could feel the darkness even across the several feet that separated them.

"How very sad," Voldemort replied, a malicious glint in his blazing red eyes. "Severus, bring in the other prisoner."

'This, Granger, is the worst of it.'

'What do you mean? Severus, what is going on?'

'A Death Eater can have no one, be attached to no one; otherwise, the Dark Lord will use them against you without thinking twice.'

'No! Severus, please tell me it isn't my...'

"Bored with me already?" Remus said, breaking their connection as Hermione looked frantically at a man she had once loved, a man who had betrayed her like all the others, even though just with his words.

"Crucio!" Voldemort hissed, watching as Remus' hands fell to the floor and he screamed in pain, brow beading with sweat as he tried to fight the curse. He released him moments later, watching as the man glared at him and panted heavily. "Do not think that I am finished with you yet, wolf. It was a hard test that I set for our Hermione and I feel that she needs the proper persuasion."

As if on cue, the doors opened and Hermione's heart fell to the floor with a thud. Severus walked in, his hand gripping the arm of her very own father.

"Hermione?" he croaked through his parched throat.

"Father!" she whimpered in return, running to the man before her and forgetting those around them. "I don't understand," she whispered. "You were supposed to be gone. How did they get you?"

"We went back to the house and they were waiting. A man, Remus, he tried to hold them off, but..."

Her father's rough voice turned into the loud screams of a tortured Muggle as he fell to the floor and writhed before his daughter.

"Stop!" she cried, begging the Dark Lord to leave her father alone. The darkness washed over her fully and she waited to be punished for her outburst. Instead, she watched as Voldemort Levitated her father and let him fall to the ground beside Remus.

"The choice is yours, pet," he murmured softly, making her shiver despite the current situation. "Curse one or I will do both for you. And I assure you, witch, I have grown tired of the Cruciatus Curse."

"Don't you see? Your whore can't curse those she loves," Remus spat hatefully, eyes locked with Hermione's now cold ones and daring her to curse him.

"Excuse me!" her father asked through shaky lips.

"How dare you call me a whore?" she hissed.

"Easy, Granger," he mocked, "It is what you are. Tell me, how many Death Eaters have you been with? Two? Three? Or do they pass you around and all take..." Suddenly he stopped speaking as Hermione raised her hand and sent Remus flying through the air to land against a nearby wall.

He looked up at her in relief, but his expression quickly changed when he realized she was walking towards him. Another curse hit his side and he could feel the pain as the blood poured onto the floor beside him.

Hermione had snapped. Only Remus would know how to truly hurt her the most and the fact that he had used it against her cut deeper than the actual act of Ron and Tonks' betrayal. Not only had he hurt and angered her, he had publicly humiliated her. The darkness completely engulfed her, washing over every inch of her as she stormed closer to the man before her. Who he was mattered not, nor did the fact that she was surrounded by so many others. All that

mattered to her now was the immense feeling of power and control that came from her anger and retaliation.

‘Granger! That is enough!’ she heard Severus yell, but his voice was like an echo in her mind.

She threw another hex and another, reveling in his screams of pain and agony even as she felt her strength begin to fade. She cast a final Crucio before Severus became so forceful she could no longer ignore him.

‘Dammit, Granger! Stop or I’ll stop you myself! He only meant for you to curse him instead of your father, not for you to kill him! Control yourself!’

Hermione looked up at Severus, breaking her curse as the entire room slowly began to breathe again. It wasn’t her friend’s gaze that caught and held hers, but Lucius’. She could see the shock written on his face, but it was the trepidation mixed with sorrow in his eyes that really drew her back into herself. Looking around, she realized all the Death Eaters were looking at her with expressions of awe and wariness. Apparently, she had scared them all.

Finally, after what felt like minutes but couldn’t possibly be, Voldemort said softly, “Well done, Pet. He has felt your anger and you have proven yourself to everyone. Severus, take the Muggle back to his room. He will remain untouched by you all, that is an order! Greyback, you may do as you wish with the half-breed.”

Remorse for her actions flooded her almost cold heart as she looked back to a man she had once respected above all others. What would become of him now? Would he even survive? He was looking at her, his heartbreak clearly written across his face as he shakily made to stand. It was as though he no longer cared what happened to him, as though he had already lost everything. Hermione told herself that it would have happened either way, he would have been cursed by the Dark Lord if not by her, but this way, she had saved her father.

“Milord,” Hermione said without feeling, “Perhaps we should keep him.”

“What the bloody hell are we supposed to do now?”

“Potter, control yourself. You do us all a great disservice by losing control. As I was saying,” Severus repeated himself, watching as the boy slowly made to sit back down, “Lupin has been captured and the Dark Lord is holding him prisoner. I have been keeping him from healing completely because I can only assume he will be forced to give answers. They will use torture to gain secrets about the Order and-”

“Stop it!” Harry snarled.

“You must know the truth, Potter. How else can you be prepared? The Dark Lord is stepping up his current efforts and now that he has your leader, he will not stop until the entire Order falls. The Ministry is already close to his hands and I can only imagine that Hogwarts is no different. Offensive action must be taken. Immediately.”

“Where’s Hermione? Surely she can do something,” Harry said weakly.

“You depend on others entirely too much, Potter. It is up to you now, no one else. You know what must be done and it is up to you to do it; that is why I am speaking only to you. Have you destroyed all the Horcruxes yet?”

“I think so. Dumbledore was sure Nagini was one as well, but that would make eight. The last two we found recently and destroyed yesterday.”

“The snake is not a Horcrux. It would appear he decided not to use a living being after all and my tests have all been conclusive. He did not want to use a lower being that could very well die itself. Have you thought of what you plan to do now that he is mortal?”

Harry heard a noise, but chose to ignore it. In Grimmauld Place, there were always thumps and bumps.

“There’s a room in the Department of Mysteries that Dumbledore told me about. He said it held love. Remus and I were discussing the idea

that we may be able to harness that power and use it against Vol...him."

"That might very well work, but only if you were able to draw him into it. I daresay he would not walk willingly to his death."

Harry smiled, a faint smile that he had never shown Snape before, but throughout their discussion he had felt an overwhelming sense of personal confidence come over him, and was thankful to the man with whom he was speaking. Now, it was as though he knew that this was something he alone had to do, and he was ready for it to end. "No, I don't think he will. We'll need to lure him there, I believe, but that is where my plan ends."

"I will take care of luring him there, but it will be up to you to do the rest. Remember, he has no idea that Lucius and I are affiliated with the Order; he will depend on us to help him."

"And Hermione? What of her?"

Severus sighed heavily. "I do not know. I fear she is slowly becoming lost to us all. She has felt the ultimate betrayal from your side, those she considered family, those she loved, and the darkness she harnesses is using that against her. She was forced to torture Lupin herself and I have yet to discern what sort of impact that has had on her. Most Death Eaters respect her, even fear her, and even the Dark Lord is becoming enamoured with her. He has shared things with her that no one else could ever hope to learn, not even you with the connection you share, and I fear she is taken with him as well."

"You think she loves him?" Harry asked incredulously.

"When they are alone, he is not the Dark Lord with her, but Tom Riddle. He shows her his other, more human side, and I fear that she is having trouble keeping the two together. She has completed interesting research on Muggle-borns and he will soon be using that to his advantage as well. The war must end soon, Potter, if it is to end at all."



"We've lost her," Harry said quietly, "and it's all my fault. I took up for Ron when he hurt her, and I felt betrayed by the dreams I was having and took it out on her the one time I've had seen her in months," he added, unable to stop the tears of regret falling freely down his face, even in front of a man he disliked so much. "I left her there to die, just like the others. She was my best friend and I just left her there! How could I have done that to her? She would have died trying to save me and I let them all convince me to leave her. I betrayed everything that was good in our relationship and everything that was good in her." He hung his head in shame. "I never deserved to be her friend, I never deserved her."

Even as the words left his mouth, he knew he meant them to his very core. Hermione was more than he could have ever asked for and he had acted without regard to the person she truly was. He expected a scathing remark from the man before him, or a glare at the very least, what he never expected, was to see Severus' hand cover his own and squeeze gently.

"No, you didn't," he said without malice. "She is so much more than any of you deserve, but she loved you still. You, Harry, are like your mother in ways you'll never know, and I feel it is your ability to know when you've wronged someone and to feel that remorse as strongly as you do, that will save you in the end."

Harry looked up slowly, his bright green eyes meeting Severus' as he stared at him in a new light. Severus was surprised to find that the eyes no longer haunted him. The little witch left in his care had wormed her way into places that he would never have expected and suddenly, he wanted to see her almost as much as he wanted his next breath, but that was something he was unwilling to tell anyone.

A thud came from the door and they both turned sharply towards it.

"I must go now," he said, standing from the table and allowing Harry to compose himself without notice. "We need to make sure Draco is secure, otherwise, I feel we have a problem far larger than your broken heart."

As they walked quickly from the room and towards the one Draco was staying in, dread began to fill Severus. His suspicions were confirmed when they saw Ron lying in a crumpled heap on the floor in front of Draco's room.

"I must go," Severus said again, racing out of the front door and disappearing with a loud 'pop'.

He arrived at the Manor just in time to notice a convergence of people standing in a circle along the Main Hall. When he heard the whispers of "...thought he was dead..." and "...Did he say the Order of the Phoenix..." he felt a fear like never before.

"Severus," a cold, soft voice echoed through the room and the others parted to allow him entry. There, sitting before the Dark Lord in the very front of the room, was Draco Malfoy. His arrogant smile was directed at Severus, making the older man's fear quickly turn to anger. He did, however, avoid looking at Lucius, knowing only fear and worry would be found there.

He bowed respectfully and responded, "Yes, Milord."

"Do you see what has suddenly appeared, Severus? Am I to believe this apparition is a ghost or is he real?"

"Crucio." Severus expected the pain, but the scream came from Draco instead. Voldemort lifted the spell soon after and looked back at Severus. "He screams as though he is with the living, Severus."

"Yes, Milord."

'He has only said that he escaped from the Order and came directly here with information, Severus. You have not been implicated in any way, but that's not to say you won't be before this is over.'

'Thank you, Hermione. When you find the time, we need to talk.'

"Were you not just at an Order meeting, Severus? Tell me, why is it then, that you did not know he was there."

How the bloody hell was he supposed to answer that question?

"Perhaps, Milord, Severus did not know because he was never told," Hermione interjected from a plush chair on Voldemort's right. "The Order would not have given him that information if they believed that you would somehow be able to extract it from him. Severus plays his part well, Milord, but they do not fully trust him."

"No, Milord, I was never told where they kept their prisoners," he answered honestly.

"He spoke directly to Potter, Master, and I thought it most important that you know what was being said as quickly as possible," Draco said reverently. "There is a room in the Ministry and Potter will use something there against you, Master."

"Did I ask for you to speak, Draco?" he hissed.

"No, Master. Forgive me, Master."

Severus watched with growing dread as Voldemort stared into Draco's eyes. All secrets would be revealed and a very good, quick lie would have to be formulated if he wished to survive. However, as soon as the look began, he felt the wisp of magic from Hermione flow into Draco. Voldemort continued to stare for several long moments before speaking, apparently no one noticed the magic but him.

"Take him back to the dungeons. I can find no memories in his pathetic mind of the time he has been held, only of his escape. He is worthless to me. And do not forget, young Malfoy, my witch has yet to show you her vengeance. It is quite a sight to behold."

"Master no! Please Master! Have Merc-." Without another word, the young man was dragged from the room, kicking and trying to scream against the Silencing Charm Hermione had quickly cast upon him.

She glanced at Lucius for a moment before quickly looking away; the overbearing sadness and remorse was too much for her to see and she couldn't handle looking at him any longer. Seeing his face, looking upon his sudden humanity, made her darkness ebb slightly,

took some of her power away, and she wasn't sure she liked the feeling.

"Everyone leave. Only Severus, Hermione, Lucius, and the Lestranges shall stay." At his command, everyone immediately stood and left the room.

"Tell me, Severus, what it is you have discovered during your meeting tonight."

"It would appear, Milord, that Dumbledore told Potter of a room in the Department of Mysteries that holds a power so great that it might have the potential vanquish you. It would appear to be a fragile line of thought and Potter knows nothing more about the room than that."

"I see. What did you give them in return?"

"Only that we captured their wolf, Milord. That was enough."

A manic glint passed his red eyes, the vertical slits flashing with glee. "I would think so, yes. The filthy half-breed is recovering and we will extract more information from him later."

Severus glanced over at Hermione, hoping to see some sign of fear. What he saw instead was a calculating look only moments before she spoke.

"Milord, what if we were to get to the room first? That way, we could destroy whatever it contained and there would be nothing left that Harry could use in it. No matter how fragile."

Was she saying this to lure the Dark Lord to the room? Or was she actually trying to protect him as she made it seem? Severus couldn't tell for sure, and that bothered him.

"I agree, Master," Bella said excitedly as she leaned closer to him. "If we destroy whatever this room holds, then it will no longer be a threat to you!"

"Do you feel as though I need protecting, Bella?" he hissed.

“Of course not, Master. No one has power such as yours.”

“I agree. We shall discuss this later. Leave me.”

They all rose and it was only when Severus turned to close the doors that he noticed Hermione had stayed behind. She was currently standing in front of the Dark Lord, his appearance that of Tom Riddle, and lowering her robes from her shoulders suggestively. He shuddered in revulsion and turned in time to see Lucius take a deep breath and walk away.

Hermione entered the lower room without hesitation and looked around; the Dark Lord had ordered her down to oversee the training of his Death Eaters and to perhaps join if she felt the need. He had said he knew she was adept and powerful, and thought that sharing her talents might be beneficial to others in his regime. She smirked to herself when she thought that the real reason was because he wanted to be rid of her for a bit. He had been slightly edgier lately and she wasn't sure why. Occasionally, he even looked as though he were in pain. Thankfully, he had yet to take it out on her, but she was always cautious around him and no longer tried to provoke him.

Studying the room, she noticed the shouts of curses that echoed as bright lights exploded all around. Death Eaters spun and blocked curses almost as quick as they shot them off, paying little mind to the goings on around them and concentrating solely on their opponents. The Death Eaters were a thing of beauty when they were in their element, and nothing brought them out more than the chance of besting one of their own. Instead of helping one another, they were fighting for all but the death of their opponent; knowing their master would kill them all where they stood if they went that far.

She caught sight of Severus and Lucius and felt her heart clench slightly as she gazed upon her former lovers' back. Relief that her humanity wasn't completely dead flooded her for a second as she gazed upon the long blond hair that she loved so much and the smooth, manicured hands that had touched her in ways she had never imagined when she was younger. She, Hermione Granger, had once fallen in love with Lucius Malfoy, only to be taken away by Lord

Voldemort himself--what a life she led. The leathers of his fighting uniform clung to his body and she felt the heat pull to her centre as she stared at his delectable backside, only to mentally slap herself for openly ogling him. Had the Dark Lord witnessed such a thing, she mused, as she turned away from him, they would both be dead on the spot.

‘Granger, what are you doing here?’

‘Hello to you as well, Severus. The Dark Lord has ordered me here to observe the Death Eaters in training.’

Neither gave any outward signs that they had noticed the other. Severus continued talking to Lucius and a couple others, while Hermione’s eyes continued to scan the surrounding area.

‘I would like to speak with you, as I mentioned days ago, if it is finally convenient.’

‘Don’t be absurd, Severus; you know we can only talk when he’s not around.’

‘Of course, I had forgotten his ability to suddenly intercept our thoughts. Enough, Granger! Listen to me and listen well. I have spoken to Potter and it seems he is finally ready to accept his position as leader in this war. That being said, it is a fight at the Department of Mysteries that he seeks and that we shall take to him.’

‘He’ll be killed on sight and you know it! You never should have convinced him to fight in this war, Severus!’

‘I convinced him? I think not, Hermione. I believe that honour belongs to you and you alone. Or are you forgetting your own words to him about stepping up and being a man? He has admitted his wrongs against you and wishes for nothing more than your forgiveness.’

‘I didn’t mean for him to go charging to his death and you bloody well know it!’

‘War is death, Granger. Tell me, are you worried for his life or that of your lover?’

‘I refuse to have this discussion with you.’

“I rather thought you might. What I need to know...what you will tell me with complete honesty...is if you plan to stab me in the back when the battle finally begins? Will you turn your back on us all to protect him, to protect what we have been fighting decades to destroy?’

‘I have no idea what you’re talking about, Severus. Don’t presume to know my mind.’

Their conversation stopped abruptly as a hex hurled by her ear and she ducked out of the way. Cold laughter filled the room and she looked up to see Antonin Dolohov’s cruel eyes fixed upon her.

“You have finally learned to duck,” he boasted and others around him laughed.

Her hand shot up, bright blue light emitting from it and connecting solidly with his chest. He went soaring backwards against the far wall and slumped down to a heap in the floor. The room went eerily silent as she stalked closer to him and then turned to face the others.

“Anyone else?” she asked loudly, a cruel smile gracing her lips as she taunted those around her. “Come on, certainly you’re not all frightened of me.”

Four others walked towards her, bowing respectably and waiting until she returned the favour. Their smirks rankled and she found herself determined to put them in their places. It no longer mattered to her that she should not show all of her strengths to those she was supposed to consider her enemies, all that mattered was that she wipe the smug looks off their pure-blooded faces.

The Death Eater to her right flung a red hex in her direction and she immediately blocked it before throwing her own hexes to each in turn. The exchange of hexes, as it could not be considered a fight, ensued for several minutes and Hermione continued to toy with them until,

one by one, they dropped around her and she was the only one standing.

Before she realized it, however, Dolohov was standing before her, wand drawn and pointing at her chest. "You will pay for that, Mudblood," he growled, watching in satisfaction as she took a single step backwards, effectively pinning herself against the wall.

Terror ripped through her brain as memories of Draco raping her flooded through her and she found herself unable to move, unable to defend herself even in the afterglow of her previous victory.

"Get away from me," she snarled up at him, raising her hands and trying desperately to hide her fears as the others watched on.

A new, very calm and lethal voice interrupted them. "I believe, Dolohov that it would be in your best interest to do as the lady has suggested."

All eyes flew to the doorway and the once aggressive Death Eater before her went suddenly pale. Hermione looked to the doorway as well and her breath caught in her throat. Lucius was looking venomous and had his wand drawn, openly pointing it at the man standing so close to her, but it hadn't been he who had spoken.

Standing beside Lucius was Rodolphus, his eyes downcast and looking at the long knife he held in one hand while he examined the blade as though they were simply talking about the weather. One booted foot was propped up behind him, making him look casual, even as fierceness emanated from his very presence.

"This does not concern you, friend," Dolohov said shakily.

Rodolphus looked up and spoke, his voice so cold Hermione wondered if icicles would form. "Touch her, Dolohov and I will gut you like a fish and hang your entrails from the rafters."

"Come now, Rodolphus, surely you don't mean that. She's nothing but a Mudblood whore."



"She belongs to our Master and to him alone. It is for that reason that each one of us should defend her with our very lives." He said sternly, glancing at all the silent Death Eaters around him before pushing himself off the doorframe with his foot and striding into the room. "Have you so easily forgotten such things? Have you so easily forgotten our meeting about bloodlines or his instructions where she is concerned? I do not go against our Master, Dolohov and, if you value your life, neither will you."

"Of course," he mumbled, looking at Hermione when he realized no one was coming to his defence. "Please, forgive my lapse in judgement."

Hermione swiftly pushed him away from her and crossed her arms protectively across her chest. "Your ignorance is forgiven, but touch me again and I will kill you myself."

With that, the room began to clear out and she closed her eyes, releasing a breath she wasn't aware she was holding. Soft fingers trailed along her cheek and down her neck and she moaned softly, leaning into the touch she knew so well.

"He was lucky Lestrage was there to save him," Lucius said quietly, "otherwise I would have dropped him where he stood."

Hermione lazily opened her eyes and looked at the man standing as royalty before her. "Why Lucius?" she asked callously. "You have made it perfectly clear that I no longer mean anything to you."

Nonplussed by her comment, he leaned steadily closer to her, his warm breath caressing her neck and making her eyelids lower slightly. "I told you, love, no one touches what is mine. You are still mine and, once the Dark Lord has been defeated, I will make sure you remember to whom it is you truly belong." As his fingers traced the lines of her neck, he could sense her willingness to give in to him; he could sense, even without the luxuries of a bond like she shared with Severus, her desire to love him.

“Lucius, watch your tongue!” she snapped suddenly, but her abrupt change was unconvincing. “You speak of treason and it will get you killed. Leave me, now, and let us not speak of this matter again.”

He refused to move, but Hermione ducked under his arm and walked swiftly to the door, leaving him alone to stare at the spot she had just vacated and wonder if he had indeed pushed her too far. Could he open himself up to love her wholly? Could his love save her before it was too late?

“Welcome to my glorious manor, Father,” Draco drawled sarcastically. “I must say, I’m rather surprised to see you lower your standards enough to come visit me.”

“Draco, your charm knows no bounds,” Lucius replied with equal sarcasm before looking pointedly at him. “Tell me why, son.”

“Why what? Why I came back? Why I did what I did to get away from there even though I can’t remember being there in the first place?” he spat hatefully. “Or perhaps you really want to know why I treated your Mudblood like the whore that she is. Is that it Father? Are you more concerned for her than your own son?”

“You were warned! I told you what I would do if you dared touch her again. Now, however, it is she you have to fear and not myself.”

“Fear?! I do not fear her, Father,” he scoffed. “I wanted her body and I took it. I wanted to show her what she really was, and I did. Isn’t that what you always told me? ‘Take what you want, Draco. It’s your right as a pure-blood.’ That, Father, is all there is to it. Our Master will realize my worth in time and he will realize how very lacking you truly are.”

Lucius stood at the entrance to his son’s cell, looking at his heir and reminding himself that it was he who had failed Draco in the first place, he who was to blame for the way the young man had turned out. The child he had forgotten to love in his own quest for dominance was sitting on a bench in his threadbare robes and glaring back at him with hatred-filled eyes. He knew Hermione would now have to kill him, but he didn’t know if he could handle it--if he could handle any more of anything.

“Did you come to stare, or do you have a reason for being here?” Draco asked before gesturing to the wall on the other side of his cell. “I believe I prefer his company to yours, though all he does is brood. They don’t even torture him; at least that would be entertaining. Some hero the werewolf turned out to be, right, Father?”

“Hermione will be forced to deal with you...if force is necessary,” he added bitterly. “She won’t have a choice but to torture and kill you for

your actions against her. She has power you haven't seen and, even wandlessly, she will kill you, son. "

His eyes went wide for the first time and Lucius could almost see a hint of fear flash across his face. "She can do that?"

"Yes, she can, she'll have to." He indicated Remus with the wave of his hand. "She did that to him in less than a minute and without a wand. Just imagine what she can do to you: someone she has reason to hate and seek revenge against. I will try to find a way to spare you, but I don't know if that will be possible a second time."

"Where will you send me this time?" All traces of arrogance were gone and Draco looked like the young child Lucius hadn't seen in over a decade. A pang of pity and guilt pulled at his heart.

"She will hurt you, Draco, either because she will want to do so, or because she will not be given a choice. IF I have the ability to send you anywhere, you will go to Atlantis and that is final."

"Father, no!" Draco said, fear even more obvious upon his face now as he struggled against the chains holding him in place on the bench. "They will strip me of my magic and turn me into something no better than a Muggle! I would rather die."

"So be it." The voice was that of a woman neither had heard come into the dungeon. "If death is preferable to you, Draco, then I will gladly help your father send you to Atlantis."

"Hermione," Lucius said quietly, "when did you come down here? Why did you come down here?"

"I have apologies of my own to make, Lucius. That is all you need to know. If you want your son alive, you shall have it."

Draco snickered from his bench, false bravado strongly in place in the face of someone he refused to look weak in front of. "Seems she no longer cares, Father. You have committed the ultimate pure-blood sin by falling in love with a Mudblood. Worse yet," he laughed, "one that does not return your sentiments. How very foolish of you, Father."

“Crucio!” Hermione hissed, watching as Draco screamed and jerked against his bindings. “Speak to your father like that again, ferret, and you will truly see my anger.” She turned back to Lucius, only to see his head bowed in sadness. “Severus needs you upstairs, Lucius. Perhaps you should allow what comes to your son to come, knowing that you both deserve it for your failures.”

His head jerked up and he glared at her. He couldn’t argue, however, knowing that he had indeed failed Draco. With a quick turn, he walked away from them both.

“My mother killed herself because he preferred you, yet you show him no preference in return. That’s cold, Granger, even from you,” Draco panted.

“You speak of things you know nothing about,” Hermione snarled. “Your mother killed herself because Rabastan no longer wanted her. Rodolphus even refused to see her again, but that didn’t hurt nearly as much as having the man she truly loved not return those feelings. She killed herself over the loss of Rabastan, Draco, it had nothing to do with me, nor your father.

“However, your inability to think things through has landed you where you are now. Funnily enough, it was the Dark Lord himself who helped me heal after what you did to me. Your need to prove yourself worthier than I has put your father and I in this position for the second time now. I personally don’t care what happens to you, not after what you did to me, but I care about your father, which means that, by extension, I have to care about your welfare as well.”

“Don’t do me any favours, Granger. I wouldn’t want you to strain yourself. Besides, one day the Dark Lord will see you for what you truly are and there will be nothing left of you. It is that day I wish to live for and that day alone.”

Hermione raised her hand, knocking Draco unconscious. But, before she could curse him again, a dry, croaking voice caught her attention. “Hermione, that’s enough.”

Ignoring Draco completely, Hermione walked to the wall and had her first real moment of pause. Remus was shackled to the wall, his hands bound in silver above his head and his legs bound shoulder-width apart, bearing the full weight of his slumped body. The silver had burned his skin raw as the lycanthrope's head remained lowered in pain and agony. His haunted eyes, however, looked at her without fail. She could see the bruises along his face, the outlines of brutality shown brightly against his too pale skin, and she felt her heart beat for the first time in many months. As her eyes wandered farther down his chest and torso, she saw the blood caked to his tattered robes where she herself had sliced open his skin in a fit of rage. Looking for any sign of a glamour, any sign that this wasn't as bad as it appeared to be, her eyes raked across his face and wrists once more.

"Cursing him," Remus croaked, "makes you no better than them, Hermione, and you are so much more."

Anger flared at his words; anger for her own actions against him, anger for the words he said that caused it, anger at the war in general. "I am but a whore, Remus. Isn't that what you yourself said? Even Draco bleeding Malfoy agrees with you there. How does that make me more than them, Remus, if everyone thinks so little of me?"

"Anger-" He broke off, coughs racking his now too thin frame for several moments before he spoke again. "Anger was the only way to make you curse me...the only way to save your father."

She took a deep breath, anger leaving her as she whispered softly, "I can heal you, if you'd let me." She walked closer to him, only a small amount of space separating her from a man she loved like no other, a man she had betrayed.

"No!" he said, coughing again. "Severus is slowly healing me himself, but you know as soon as I'm recovered, they will try to extract information that I will refuse to give them. This is the best way."

"They put you in silver, Remus," she said, tears glistening in her eyes as, for the first time without Lucius present, she felt the darkness recede and humanity take its place.

"To bind the wolf," he said simply. "Don't worry, I'll be out of the shackles by this time next week."

"You will? Why?"

"Full moon." Hermione could sense his overwhelming sadness. "Kill me before then, Hermione, if I'm not dead already. Swear you will!" he said with such force that it stunned her.

"Kill you?! Why? No, I won't kill you!" she said, shaking her head forcefully.

"They're going to lock me in a silver cell, Hermione...with a Muggle family." His sadness and self-loathing broke her heart. "They know how to truly destroy me and they plan to finish the job without even having to touch me. Seems Greyback gave them that idea, though they're still angry they can't find him."

"My gods, Remus," Hermione gasped, her hand covering her mouth as the tears slipped down her face.

"Kill me before then, Hermione. If I am to be destroyed, I would rather die by your hand than theirs, or by my own, as I would surely not be able to live with myself."

"I'll get you out of here, Remus. I'll...I'll think of something. The Dark Lord-"

"Promise me, love. Promise you'll kill me," he pleaded, only relaxing when she slowly nodded her head in agreement.

Sobs racked her body as Hermione took in what he was saying. He was right; the only way to truly destroy Remus was to make sure he killed someone else because of his curse. It was not she, however, who gave voice to the agreement.

"It will be done," Lucius said solemnly from behind her.

“Lucius! I told you Severus needed to see you!” Hermione admonished, quickly wiping her eyes of all traces of her weak moment.

“I decided to wait, but thank you for the information.”

Remus regarded him cautiously before slowly nodding his head. “You are no longer bound to the Order, Lucius. We weren’t able to save your son.”

“No one can save those that do not wish to be saved. I am still bound by the Vow to do what is right by certain standards. Although,” he added, looking at Hermione uncertainly, “I’m not sure if those standards have changed.”

Hermione turned on her heel and quickly headed for the door, only to feel Lucius grab her around the waist and push her against the door.

“Get off me, you bastard!” she hissed as she tried to push him away and hold back the angry tears. “You’re a cold man who only looks out for himself. If you would willingly kill him, then I want nothing to do with you ever again!”

His grip on her tightened. “Maybe I am cold, Hermione, but things change and you are the only reason I am even trying. I would choose to end his misery before they force him to do the unthinkable, but not for the reasons you may think. It has nothing to do with jealousy any longer, but everything to do with being a man.”

He was too close. Hermione could see his nostrils flare in his anger; his usually pristine hair tangled slightly at his shoulders. Heat radiated from his body as he struggled to maintain control of his actions and she gave an involuntary moan.

His eyebrows raised and a slight grin curved his mouth. “Still? I have not been fully replaced?”

“Let me go,” she hissed, anger sparked by her physical reaction to him and the knowledge that he knew of her desire.



Without warning, he grabbed her arms and pinned them above her head. "I am the one who loves you, my witch, not the Dark Lord, and it shall be I you will be with in the end. Do not lie to yourself. You cannot deny me, nor can you deny your true self."

Tears of frustration leaked down her cheeks and she tried to blink them back. He shifted both of her hands into one of his, bringing his face closer, his nose almost touching hers as he wiped away her tears with his soft fingers. "I love to see you cry," he said softly, giving a slight smile when she glared at him. "It means you still feel, my love, that you still have your heart."

His head lowered again, and he gently caught her lips with his own, searing her soul with a kiss that threatened to break her heart. She could handle tough, could handle when the Dark Lord cursed her for his own pleasure, but she could no longer handle gentle and sweet. When he slipped his tongue into her mouth, bringing both hands to her face and holding her as though she were the most precious thing in the world, her body raged with desire and her cold, hardened heart beat rapidly against her chest.

Frustrated, angry and confused, she struggled against him and he broke the kiss reluctantly. "Run, Hermione," he mocked, his rising chest the only indication that he was just as affected as she. "Run back to the Dark Lord, to the power that seduces you so heavily, but know that it is only I who can love you the way you deserve; and it is only you who I wish to love me in return."

Love?! She fled the dungeons, fled from his warmth and his words of affection, knowing that she didn't deserve them. Trying to convince herself that she didn't want to hear such things either, she slowed her pace and turned the corner, knocking right into a very broad chest. When she looked up, thankful her eyes were now dry, she met Rodolphus' heated gaze.

His eyes raked over her for several moments before his tongue flicked out to wet his lips and he finally spoke to her, his voice as mesmerizing as his eyes. "Hermione, you have just saved me the trouble of finding you. Our Master has called a meeting and we are to attend now."

Straightening, she replied, "And who will be in attendance?"

"You and I, of course. Severus, who is looking for Lucius as we speak, and Bella as well. I am sure Wormtail will be there, as well as a few others. The Dark Lord wishes to discuss the upcoming battle." There was a manic glint in his eyes now that Hermione found herself appreciating. The battle...the end.

"Then let us not keep him waiting," she said, a calculating look on her face as she began thinking of the Department of Mysteries and all the possibilities it now held.

Severus stood to the side, watching the entire exchange and noting that Hermione had quickly covered the emotions that had been playing on her face, along with the tears he was sure he had seen. He also knew, as the sun would set in the west in a few hours, that Lucius was to blame. His friend may have feelings for this little witch, but lately, he only managed to make matters worse. Hermione was losing her battle against the darkness that haunted her soul, and Lucius had the ability to push her over the edge or bring her back to safety. He furrowed his brows at an unfamiliar feeling wrestling inside of him. She needed to be saved, but he was certain that only he understood her enough to do what needed to be done. It was not his job, however, and all he could do was try to keep her safe and hope that Lucius actually pulled through, for once. Otherwise, he feared he would have to take drastic measures in the end. He choked down the bile that rose in his throat at the thought of having to kill her to protect their cause.

"Severus, what are you doing loitering in the corridor?"

Severus' head snapped up when he heard Lucius' voice. The dungeons, of course. "I was looking for you. The Dark Lord has requested our presence for his latest meeting. Apparently he wishes to devise a way to intercept Potter's own plans."

"I see," Lucius said, calmly watching him. It was obvious he had seen Hermione turn the corner with Rodolphus along with the look on

Severus' face as she left. "And tell me, my friend, does coming to find me always put such a contemplative look on your face?"

"I have no idea what you are referring to. Come, we are going to be late," Severus said sharply, turning and walking down the hall.

Lucius nodded his head. "I have no desire to be cursed for our tardiness. Perhaps we should finish this discussion later."

"There is nothing to discuss," Severus said as he stopped short, glaring at his friend even as his face turned red in anger. "Have you not been paying attention? Have you not noticed that the Dark Lord has failed to curse either of us a single time since Hermione took the Mark? And it would have been justified on several occasions."

Scratching his head and smoothing down his hair, Lucius looked fairly taken aback. "No, I hadn't noticed. Wait, you are not implying-"

"I am saying exactly that! She agreed to take the mark to protect us. It's as plain as the nose on your face now that I think about it." He threw his hands to his sides and paced slightly, hoping beyond reason that he was onto something. "Why else would she do it? She gave up her entire existence, even though I warned her of the consequences, just to protect us. And you," he snarled, pointing his finger into Lucius' chest, "do not even deserve such an act from her."

Lucius quirked his eyebrow at Severus' behaviour and stated calmly, "And you do, I suppose? Tell me, friend to friend, are there limitations on your feelings for her? Do you wish to take her as well? Because I assure you, Snape," he spat, "it will not work. I fully plan to fight for her, and that will include you as well."

"You know not of what you speak. Come, let us go before the Dark Lord is forced to summon us."

They walked into the meeting room, neither speaking to the other as they moved around the table to take their places. Severus took the only available chair next to Hermione, and nodded in greeting, while Lucius glared in his direction and took the seat next to his sister-in-law.

“Now that you have all decided to join us,” Voldemort said coldly, “let us discuss our upcoming endeavour. If what my less than brilliant follower has said is without falsities,” he began, shooting an accusing look at Lucius as though he were expressly responsible for Draco’s actions, “then we may indeed have a way of defeating the enemy once and for all. A way in which luck, along with friends more skilled and intelligent than him, will not be able to save him. My spies have confirmed the existence of a room held within the Ministry.”

He paused for several moments, secure in the knowledge that everyone’s attention was focused solely on their Master. This is what he expected from his Death Eaters after all, and he would tolerate no less than their self-sacrificing loyalty and devotion.

“Severus, have you acquired any knowledge of this room or their plans for it?”

“No, Milord. He only spoke of the room and the end result they wish to achieve.”

“And the wolf, what of his knowledge?”

“He is, as of yet, unable to undergo questioning, Milord. For reasons I cannot name, he is healing very slowly.”

A twisted smile graced his snake-like face as he glanced at Hermione. “Yes, it appears my newest recruit is quite vindictive. No matter, we shall question him tonight regardless. He will answer the questions or die, and at this point, it is of no consequence either way.”

Hermione felt a surge of anger and desperation course through her. It certainly made a difference to her whether Remus lived or not, especially since she was the one who put him in that condition in the first place. Panic and remorse began to eat away at her until she felt Severus touch her mind. A familiar sense of warmth and understanding flooded her even before he spoke.

‘You must remain calm, Hermione. I told you I would keep him from harm and I will honour my word. We have Lucius’ word as well.’

Before she could respond, a loud 'boom' resounded through the room, shaking the very foundation upon which they stood. The Death Eaters sprang into action, all following the Dark Lord's commands to solidify the building, find the source of the disturbance and destroy it once found. Pandemonium ensued as they all ran around, in and out of the room. Hermione began repairing the damage around them after Voldemort's command that she not leave his presence. She watched as Severus and Lucius left through a hidden door she hadn't previously noticed, only to return a few minutes later, the sounds of damaged walls and ceilings resounding through the other open door.

Another tremor passed around the room, knocking screeching portraits to the ground, along with books and the plaster from the walls. Hermione bolted towards the door, ready to take action, only to find herself drawn back under the bodies of Severus and, surprisingly, Rodolphus as well.

"Our Master cannot command us if he is-"

His words were cut off by a booming voice that was heard as soon as the house stilled.

"RELEASE YOUR PRISIONERS OR WE WILL DESTROY THE HOUSE AND EVERYONE IN IT!"

Hermione groaned. "Now?" she whispered to Severus. "He picks now to step up?"

"Potter," Voldemort growled loudly before a nasty grin hitched under his flat nose. "Bella, go take care of him. He is unaware of my presence and I wish for him to remain as such for the time being. We will meet on my terms and not before."

She left immediately. Seconds turned into minutes and they all began to relax somewhat; even Rodolphus and Severus released her, allowing her to stand on her own as they awaited Bella's return.

'He sent her for a reason,' Severus said shortly.

'I believe he knew that having Harry face Sirius' murderess would allow his emotions to get the better of him.'

Severus watched her for a moment. Was she smiling? Did she actually take pleasure in knowing that her long-time friend was going to be distraught?

"Were you aware of this attack, Severus?"

"Of course not, Milord! I would have told you immediately."

Hermione could sense his honesty, but before she had time to dwell on their deeper connection, Bella popped back in to the room, a gleeful smile at having the pleasure of taunting Harry Potter contorting her insane features as she bowed deeply.

"Milord, they are many. More, I daresay, than we can fight with most of your followers on their mission."

"I did not ask for a battle count, Bella," he snarled. "Tell me now what it is he wishes for, so that I may manipulate this to our advantage before he ruins the Manor."

"He has requested only the return of three people, Milord. The wolf, of course, along with the witch that you gave to Severus," she replied, glancing at Severus and then to Hermione, but quickly back to Voldemort. Everyone, it seemed, missed Severus' indrawn breath.

"What else?" Voldemort growled, his impatience with her growing by the second.

"He wants Hermione as well, Milord," she said meekly.

"HE WHAT?!"

"Milord, I told him she was one of us now. He said he would never leave her behind again. I'm not sure what he meant by that, Milord, but those were his exact words. He also said he would simply take her whether she was willing or not."

“Never!” Voldemort hissed angrily, the venom coating his words made them all recoil slightly. His voice was so loud and menacing that only a few heard Lucius’ “No!” at the same time. Luckily Voldemort was not one of them.

They all patiently waited on his decision while trying not to marvel at his reaction to Harry’s threat. Hermione, however, was stunned beyond thought and scared as well. Harry did regret leaving her behind, after all. Pity she refused to go with him even now. For some reason, her eyes sought Lucius. He was staring at her, emotions playing across his face and through his eyes that she refused to acknowledge.

Voldemort’s voice broke through her musings and she turned to look at him. He was now sitting back at the head of the table, his long, pale fingers stroking the side of his cheeks and his expression thoughtful. “Send him the wolf. He is not long for this world and it will do my cold heart good to feel Potter’s pain when he is told who is responsible.” Hermione inwardly cringed. His gaze landed on Severus next. “Severus, you will need to relinquish your slave as well. There will be more to come and, when the world becomes ours, you will get your choice first.”

“Whatever you wish, Milord,” Severus said, his face devoid of emotion even though Hermione could feel a slight reluctance on his part.

“Very well,” Voldemort replied with a nod, looking back to Bella. “Send the witch as well. Tell him Hermione is not an option as he cannot expect to claim a Death Eater. Tell him,” he said slowly, an evil glint in his glowing, red eyes, “that we are currently on our honeymoon and are unreachable at this time. I shall have fun hearing of his reaction.”

Hermione gasped softly, before a sadistic smile graced her face. Bella popped out once more.

‘I thought he would know of Potter’s reaction immediately. First hand?’ Severus said suddenly.

'If he opens the connection, Harry will know he is here. He will be able to feel his presence.'

"Send your slave, Severus," Voldemort commanded, and, with a snap of Severus' fingers, Ophelia was sent from her room to the front stoop.

'Hope she wasn't bathing,' Severus said sarcastically.

Before she could respond that he would surely miss her and that it was obvious he was trying to act as though he would not, the house was under attack once more. Voldemort looked at Severus and, with an air of warning that could not be missed by anyone lacing his voice, said coldly, "Take her to safety!" Small explosions sent the walls blazing with fire. Sections of the ceiling began to cave and Death Eaters, once again, ran back and forth. Hermione stood before a fire, weaving a spell to extinguish it even as Severus pulled her arm.

"Hermione, go!" Lucius said from beside her. "Go to safety."

"Get her out!" Voldemort said once more. "I will summon you after I have dealt with the Order." Looking at Hermione's hesitant face, he added, "Do as I say!"

Severus grabbed her around the waist and, with a 'pop' no one could hear, they disappeared. Only seconds later they reappeared in a dark, gloomy looking room she had never seen before.

"Welcome to my house," Severus said, his wand circling them to light the candles held up along the wall. When she looked at him, his face was menacing, and all the anger was directed solely at her; anger she could feel through their bond, but was so evident that she needed nothing else to tell her she was in for a very interesting conversation. "We need to talk," he snarled, and she gasped at the venom in his voice.



"Sit down," Severus commanded and she did so immediately.

"What do we need to talk about?"

"You. I warned you when you first read the book that it was all a test; a test of your strength and courage, or your willpower. I also told you to stay out of it. This was my fight and I knew you would only be a hindrance."

"A hindrance?" she screeched.

"Yes!" His booming voice brought her up short. "Not only do I have to protect myself from them, but I have to protect you as well, and you make that impossible. I told you not to take the Mark, yet you did. I'm well aware," he said, overriding her voice as she tried to interrupt him, "that you did what you did to protect Lucius and I, even if you refuse to admit it, but it was foolish."

"I am no fool, Severus," she said quietly.

A small smile touched his lips before he looked at her sombrely. "I know that more than most, Hermione, but I also know that the darkness is winning within you. You are supposed to fight it, work with it, yes, but not let it consume you."

"It hasn't consumed me!" she huffed, standing back up before him.

"When do you feel normal? When do you feel a modicum of how you used to feel, years ago?"

His question threw her for a moment and then she began to think. "I don't know that I've felt that way in a long time, Severus."

"Think hard, Hermione. You are an intelligent woman, but when it comes to your own emotions you can be rather obtuse."

"I still don't understand what you are trying to tell me." She knew, and he knew that she knew, but she simply was not willing to divulge her true feelings.

"I read that book decades ago, and I have lived with the darkness ever since. It has saved my life on numerous occasions, but it has left me feeling less than I have ever felt before." He walked closer to her and gently cupped her cheek with his hand, allowing the emotions to wash over her for a moment before he continued. "I feel the way I used to feel only during the times I have been with Ophelia, and the times that I am with you. You have become my anchor instead of me becoming yours."

She fought back the tears that had suddenly formed with his sincere words and nodded her head. "Lucius," she said softly and was glad that he understood without her needing to say more. "And you."

"Yet," he replied, a hard edge to his voice as he let his hand slip from her face, "I find myself watching you closer, wondering when the time will come." He put distance between them.

"I do not need to be watched like a child, Severus. And what time are you waiting for exactly?"

"The time when I will have to kill you myself," he said coldly, inclining his head slightly when she gasped. "Continue on this path, Hermione, and it will come to that. If you interfere again with my plans, in any way, and damage what I have worked most of my life to achieve, then I will kill you myself. He will not win...I will not allow it."

"You speak of killing the Dark Lord?" she asked in shock.

He raised his eyebrows and she realized too late what she had said. "There was a time when you spoke of nothing else."

"I have gotten to know him. He is not the megalomaniac that we believed him to be. He wants power, yes, but he doesn't want to destroy Muggles or Muggle borns, especially not after what I told him."

"Watch yourself, Granger, because I will be watching you, too. I pledged my life for this and I do not intend to fail now. You can go to him, give him your body and your soul, but if you give him my secrets, I will kill you for that as well." His voice was cold, but it was the

disappointment and the hurt she found in his eyes that tore at her heart.

“I would never give your secrets, Severus.”

“Then we shall remain at an impasse, I believe. What of Lucius? He is the one who loves you, the one you belong to, even if only by your heart.”

“I do NOT belong to anyone!” she hissed. “He has repeatedly said that I am his and treats me like his personal property, but I am not a thing in which someone can claim!”

As if to mock her very words, they both grabbed their left arms at the sudden burning of pain.

“While he lives, Hermione, you will belong to the Dark Lord and no one else. Not even to yourself. You will not be allowed to further your relationship with Lucius in the way you both desire. Go now. Remember what I said and for Merlin’s sake, as well as your own, remember that you are a Gryffindor. You still have your heart, Hermione, listen to it above all other things.”

“Where are you going?”

“Lupin will need to be healed now that he is with the Order and safe.”

It felt as though a knife had pierced her heart and she turned quickly before he could see the look of guilt she was surely displaying. The emotions were tiring, did he not understand that? Guilt, mistrust, self-doubt, pity...they were all exhausting and when the darkness took over, she felt none of them. That is what she wanted more than anything. She wanted to feel powerful, but otherwise, she didn’t want to feel at all.

With a soft ‘pop’ she found herself standing before Tom in their now shared quarters. “Milord!” she said happily, giving him a slight bow before walking over to him quickly. “I am so happy to see you are all right!”

“Did you fear I would be otherwise?”

“Not at all, Milord, but I will admit to worrying about you from time to time.”

“Touching,” he replied, but she knew he did not find her sentiments to be anything of the like. “Potter was not easily deterred from acquiring you, Hermione. Why is that, do you believe?”

“Perhaps he feels guilty for leaving me behind almost a year ago. He tends to allow his emotions free reign of his actions.”

“That he does. The Final Battle approaches. I plan on gathering my most trusted and attacking the very room he covets within the next day.”

“Milord, that is great! We will do everything in our power to destroy any hope he may have of touching you.”

“We?” he asked with a raised eyebrow. He walked to her, gently stroking her face with his fingers as she leaned into his touch. “You misunderstand me, Tim Molisje. You will not be going anywhere, or fighting anyone. I have come to a very disturbing realization recently, and have decided that you are to remain here where you will be safe.”

“No, Tom! You can’t do that! I have earned the right to fight by your side. You need me!” she pleaded with him as she grabbed the front of his robes.

His hands circled her wrists painfully and he pulled her away from him. “Do not forget to whom it is you speak, Hermione. What I have come to need from you is your safety and existence. I have called a meeting soon from my inner circle and we will leave from there. If you would like to visit your father,” he added, trying to placate her with a visit to her dad that she had been asking for since his capture, “you may do so. Wormtail will take you to where he is being kept.”

Hermione knew that she had been dismissed and walked dejectedly from the room.

"Perk up, Hermione," Peter said from beside her as they strolled down the hallway.

"How did you know to be here?" she asked.

"The Dark Lord, of course. He said you would be going to visit your father and that I was to wait by the door and take you to him. Hopefully, he won't curse me for being late to the meeting," he added bitterly.

"You? You get to be there and I can't?"

"Of course," he said haughtily. "But he wants to keep you here, so here you shall remain."

Hermione followed him in silence for several long moments. Soon, they came to a part of the manor she had never been in before. Behind a heavy steel door, lay another hallway and Peter led her that way.

"So, tell me, Peter," she asked conversationally, "why is it that everyone calls you 'Wormtail' instead of Peter? I thought that nickname was given to you by your friends. The ones that you betrayed."

"I don't know why they call me that," he replied and she could sense he was going to say something that would not amuse her. "However, we are alike, you and I."

Against her better judgement, she asked, "How so?"

"We have both betrayed our best friends for the Dark Lord's cause. Here is your father's room. Good day."

"Peter," she called to his retreating backside. "Severus is the only friend I have, and I have not betrayed him. Whatever else you think you may know about me, you are obviously mistaken. I am nothing like you."

She refrained from hexing him right there in that very hallway. His death would mean nothing to her but Tom wouldn't be happy, and she certainly did not want to deal with him angry. Turning the knob, she gently pushed open the door and walked in to greet her father.

The room was furnished sparingly, but all the basic needs were clearly met; a table and chair for eating stood in one corner, and a bed against the far wall for sleeping.

"Hermione!" her father yelled as he rushed to her from another room and gathered her into his arms. "It's so good to see you! Thank God you're all right! Where have you been? What's been going on?"

Had he forgotten what Remus had called her? What she had done to him right in front of her father? Why was he so happy to see her? She couldn't control her thoughts and realized by his sudden intake of breath that she had asked him all those questions out loud.

"Hermione, you are first and foremost my daughter," he said, taking her hand and leading her to the bed. "I'm a stranger to your world because you chose to keep your mother and I in the dark. This took us all by surprise and I'm not happy about it. You should have told us you were in trouble; I don't know what we could have done, but anything would have been better than not knowing."

"I know, Dad, but you have to realize I'm not the same little girl that I once was. Things have...changed."

"That was made glaringly obvious the other night," he said sternly. "I am sure that whatever Remus said was a means to anger you. I've had a long time to think about it and I know it was his way of making you hurt him instead of me. I don't know how I feel about that, but there you have it. What is going on is not something I can turn to a book for answers to. I'm out of my element here. Instead, I'm choosing to worry about my wife and daughter."

"Mum will be fine. No matter what happens, you two will be together."

"How can you be so sure of that?"

She sighed loudly. "Because if the Order wins, they will come rescue you. If the Dark Lord wins, then we will go get Mum. He has given me his word."

"And you believe him? A man who tortures and kills for pleasure and you believe what he says?" he asked incredulously. "I did not raise you to have such morals, young lady."

Hermione stood quickly and walked to the door. Getting 'dressed down' by her own father after everything she had been made to endure was becoming more than she wished to handle. "The daughter you once knew is dead," she said coldly. "I have done things, Father, things that would make you hate me. And I have no excuse for my actions."

"I could never hate you, little one. Nothing could cause that."

"I killed a man, did you know that?" she asked, remembering what she had been forced to do once. At his surprised expression, she knew the answer. "No, I suppose you didn't. These are evil people I live with and I've been made to do evil things. That's just the way it is."

"But I thought you fought on the right side, Hermione," he said with confusion.

"I don't know that there is a 'right side', Dad."

He pulled her into his embrace and held her tightly, laying his head on hers the way he used to when she was a child. "I don't know what is happening, or what will happen, but you will always remain my daughter and I will always love you." Pulling back from her, he looked into her eyes and added, "The right side, little one, is the side your heart tells you to be on. You can have reservations, that is expected in one as smart and analytical as you, but when the time comes, you will just know. Perhaps your old friends will redeem themselves, or perhaps you'll see you were meant to be with this Dark Lord. That is only for you to decide."

Hermione gave him a weak hug once more and then said her goodbyes. Her father had been right; he had always been right. She needed to decide where her life was leading her and what she wished to accomplish. The indecision was overwhelming, and she hated the feeling. She hated feeling anything at all. Worse though, was her sense of uselessness at being forced to stay at the manor while the others went to the Ministry. In that moment, one thing became absolutely certain to her...the Dark Lord would not fight without her.



Hermione opened the door to the Meeting Room and looked around. Empty.

‘Severus, where are you?’ she called.

He didn’t answer her, but she could tell it was because he didn’t want to, not because he couldn’t. It would have taken only moments for him to heal Remus, and she knew he would not have wasted time returning, only to risk angering their master. That could only mean one thing--they had already left for the Ministry and he did not want her to know.

As she turned from the door and began to formulate her plan, she vaguely reprimanded herself for calling Tom her ‘master.’ That thought was quickly replaced when she realized the only thing left for her to do would be to Apparate directly to the Ministry of Magic and meet them at the Room of Love, in the Department of Mysteries. The Dark Lord would be angry, but she felt sure she could make him understand.

Snapping her fingers, she disappeared quickly, only to reappear beside the Fountain of Magical Brethren. Habit dictated that she should pull out her wand, but, circumstances what they were, there was no need for a wand with her abilities. Besides, firing hexes from two hands was much more efficient than from one wand.

The entire floor appeared to be deserted and the elevator came quickly, taking her to the Department of Mysteries in only a moment. In her anxious state, it seemed like hours. Finally, the doors clanked open, and she immediately heard shouts and explosions. The Order had arrived and this would be no easily accomplished mission to gain information; this would be the end, the final battle of a war fought for far too long.

“Milord, it still will not budge,” she heard Rodolphus say harshly as he threw another curse at what appeared to be a clear but very thick and impenetrable boulder before them.

Lucius stood at his side, firing curses as well, and she watched closely as the Dark Lord confidently walked forward and threw his

own curses at the barrier. It appeared she had arrived only moments after the others, and they had yet to notice her. The longer she watched the barrier, however, the more distinct the shapes behind it became. Mad-Eye Moody was standing before them, wand raised as though he was the one creating the blockade. Behind him, other members of the Order were scurrying around in the Rotating Room; the faces of Harry, Ron, Remus, Kingsley and several Weasleys were easily recognizable to her now. She gave a slight moment of thanks when she couldn't find Charlie, knowing that if Tom saw him, he would immediately know that Severus had lied about killing him.

Although she couldn't tell what they were doing, and there certainly did not seem to be a pattern to their movements, Hermione was sure Moody was stalling them for some particular reason, perhaps allowing them time to enter the Room of Love, even though the Death Eaters held the Rotating Room door open.

She had only seconds to ponder that before Voldemort threw another curse, shaking the obstruction, but not disrupting its permanence. Without thinking, Hermione walked forward, sliding her right hand into his left. Anger flashed across his face, but he seemed to understand time was not to be wasted.

"Stand back!" he commanded, and together their curses obliterated the clear stone as if it were made of glass. Hermione watched in shock as Voldemort sent each of the shards flying directly at Mad-Eye, millions of tiny pieces piercing his body and draining his blood almost instantly.

'Hermione, what are you doing?!' Severus asked harshly, but she ignored him as hexes from the Order began flying their way.

Sending up a shield, she walked away from the others and over to Mad-Eye. As she looked down at him for a moment, the entire room began to shake and spin, and she almost fell with the suddenness of the movement.

Within moments, she found herself shoved onto her back in between the stone benches and Severus' hard weight pressed on top of her as curses flew over his head.

"I'll ask again," he said sternly, his face mere inches from her own as he pinned her hands above her head, his large palm not allowing her to fire a single curse in his direction. "What are you doing here? All you had to do was Apparate your father from the manor and you both would have been safe!"

"Worried about me, Severus?" she asked coyly before sighing when he didn't respond like most men would. "What does it look like I'm doing here?" She thought it rather obvious. When he simply stared at her, she continued. "As you can see, the Dark Lord will see to my safety. I am in no danger here."

'The Dark Lord?' He replied, using their silent form of communication as the hexes continued to fly and yet they remained unnoticed. 'Have you forgotten he is the cause of the war we have found ourselves right in the middle of now? Most importantly, Hermione, have you forgotten which side you are supposed to be on?'

She looked at him defiantly as her hand itched with the desire to join the others, and he could sense her anger over-flowing. 'You have questioned my allegiance once, Severus. Do not make the mistake of doing so again.'

He looked down at her with surprised indignation, wondering all the while why he hadn't asked her this only hours before. Those words, words that had just come from her own mouth, were spoken as though from the Dark Lord himself.

'I will question whatever I feel needs to be questioned. You owe me an answer and you will give me one.' She stared into his eyes, her small chin sticking up as she dared him to say it again. "Answer me!" he snarled.

Before she could reply, however, a curse grazed his suddenly raised shoulder and he toppled off of her, giving her the opportunity she needed to jump up and join the battle. Her eyes took in the circular room even as she blocked spell after spell coming at her from the Order. A tattered veil was on display in the centre of a decrepit dais, and benches lined the wall. How had they gotten into the Death

Chamber when the goal had been the Room of Love? It appeared she wasn't the only one confused, and the fighting began to slow as others looked around as well.

"Hermione?" Harry asked suddenly when he saw her standing feet from him, emotions in his eyes that she refused to allow herself to acknowledge. Then his gaze drifted to the man who suddenly appeared beside her and his eyes hardened instantly.

"I will deal with you later," Voldemort growled into her ear. Turning his full attention back to Harry, he spoke loudly, his voice cold, yet calm as he commanded the attention of everyone in the room. "I believe, Harry Potter, that we have finally reached the end. This pathetic little disturbance between us must come to a close at some juncture and tonight feels acceptable."

"I agree," Harry responded through clenched teeth.

As though someone had signalled for it, they all sprang back into action, Death Eaters fighting Order members with a clash of explosions, curses, and light. Hermione blocked curse after curse again, and noticed Severus and Lucius doing the same. Still, the Order was greatly outnumbered, and in no time at all, the second member fell. Hermione was slightly surprised to see Ginny leap in front of her mother and take a curse in Molly's stead, but she couldn't say she felt sorry for the loss.

Then, as though in a Muggle horror movie, Molly screamed her agony, only to be quickly silenced when Bella cackled with glee and sent the distraught mother flying across the room and into the stone wall. She then Levitated her up in the air, like a cat playing with a mouse, and her lifeless body hit another wall before quickly being slung back again and again until, in a fit of rage and turmoil, Arthur spoke the forbidden curse and Bellatrix Lestrange fell dead at her husband's feet.

Hermione ducked behind another bench and fired a shot across her shoulder, listening as someone yelled from her minor Stinging hex, but not knowing who it was. On the other side of the bench, she came face to face with a very angry Remus.

“What the hell are you doing here?” he asked, covering her body with his own and running them behind a granite structure he had just Conjured.

“Remus, why aren’t you at Grimmauld Place?”

“Severus healed me and we came here. I didn’t know we’d have company! What are you doing?”

“Trying to stay alive at the moment,” she whispered harshly as he flung another curse around the blockade.

“Do that!” he ordered. “Stay here and don’t move until this is over.”

With those words, he took off again, wand raised and curses flying in rapid succession. Hermione, however, was fuming. Did they not believe she could do anything herself?

Suddenly, she noticed Arthur’s wand was pointed right at her and within seconds, the entire structure exploded and she ran for cover once more. She realized then that if she didn’t start defending herself more, they would kill her in no time. Harry and Voldemort were still firing curses at each other, both becoming ragged and bloody, their robes torn in several places, and she took the opportunity of the Dark Lord’s distraction to run to the other side of the room and join the battles there.

Rodolphus was duelling fantastically with Kingsley, but an Auror she didn’t recognize was sneaking up behind him with his wand drawn. She raised her hand, firing a curse and sending the man crashing against the wall with a loud ‘thud’. Turning to her quickly, Rodolphus nodded his head in acknowledgement before returning to his duel and severing Kingsley’s arm, leaving him defenceless. Another curse came her way and she quickly dodged it before spinning on her heels towards the aggressor. It would appear the Order had realized she had picked a side and were now intent on fighting her in earnest.

She quickly lost count as she watched Death Eaters become severely injured and Order members fall in death. Hermione tore her eyes

away from the mayhem just in time to dodge another curse, only this time she turned to face another frightening scene. Remus and Peter were duelling languidly on the top of the benches. After several moments, Remus smiled and flicked his wand, killing Peter instantly.

Horried, but too far away to do anything, Hermione watched as Dolohov raised his wand and trained it on Remus, who had begun looking for another target. A bright orange flame shot from the tip of the Death Eater's wand, and Hermione's heart actually shattered inside her chest as she watched Remus fall down the steps. She breathed a sigh of relief and smiled at his tenacity when he staggered to his feet, snarling angrily.

"That all you got?!" Remus yelled angrily as he spit a stream of blood out onto the stone floor and turned to face his attacker.

And then it happened. Another spell came from a different direction, catching Remus squarely in the chest and sending him flying right into the veil itself. The look of surprise frozen on his perfect face as his body drifted away into nothingness.

"NO!" Hermione screamed as her soul cried out and shattered. She rushed forward only to feel arms wrap tightly around her waist. She fought her captor hard, arms and legs flailing wildly as she desperately tried to get to the veil and save Remus; to throw herself into the abyss in what would be a meagre attempt to free him. "Remus! NO! No, please!" She screamed his name and begged for him to come back as her arms and legs continued their attack against the man restraining her. Moments later, she realized he wasn't letting go and she turned her tear-filled eyes up to stare into his sad grey ones.

"He is gone, Hermione," Lucius said softly, "and killing yourself will not bring him back."

"Remus," she whimpered, her legs suddenly so limp that only Lucius' arms around her kept her from falling to the stone floor. "I have to save him!" she cried. "Lucius you don't understand, I have to. I cannot let him go...not Remus." Tears streamed down her face as she stared up into his eyes, those beautiful grey eyes that warmed just for

her and she felt the love in that moment that she had unknowingly been dying to feel. She was his prisoner; a prisoner in his arms and to the emotions he forced her to acknowledge, to suffer, and she found the loss overwhelming.

"You must get out of here," he murmured quietly into her ear. "You must stay safe. I could not bear to lose you."

Nodding her head slowly, she felt her legs retake her weight and began to turn back toward the battle with renewed vigour. Remus was dead, and they would all pay, the Order and Death Eaters alike.

Harry and Voldemort continued to throw and dodge each others' curses, neither noticing what was going on around them as Voldemort began to taunt him about the bloody sword Harry was now holding, the sword she had watched him use to slice through McNair only moments earlier even though he had fought the Dark Lord at the same time.

Rodolphus continued his duel with Arthur, and it appeared they were both holding their own. However, with a single misstep from the red haired man, Rodolphus gruesomely avenged his wife's death by firing curse after curse and then watching coldly as Arthur's now mangled body fell into a heap beside his daughter.

Bodies of both sides lay scattered across the floor, and the chaos that reigned appeared to have no rhyme or reason, no semblance of structure save that of murder and destruction.

Before Hermione could lift her hand to rejoin the battle, a hex flew into her arm, its burning power making her scream in pain. At the same time, Severus grabbed his own arm when he felt her pain and turned towards her worriedly. They both looked for the source of the hex until her eyes locked with the dead ones of a man she had once loved, a man who had betrayed her and then lost so much himself.

"You'll pay for what you have caused," Ron said coldly, another curse flying from his wand and striking her other arm as she continued to stare at him; her body barely moved, finding through her shock that she had no desire to defend herself against him or his slight hexes.

He was an annoyance to her now, no longer a source of emotional pain, and she would take care of him now rather than wait.

However, when she glanced at Severus to gauge his reaction, she saw a curse strike his back, the surprised look on his face was haunting as his body toppled down from the bench he had been standing. His head hit loudly on the one before him and he went completely limp. It was then that she felt his pain as if it were her own; felt her world come crashing down amongst the blazing lights of hexes and curses, the screams of pain and rage that echoed in her head until the noises became a dull roar, and amongst the tears that poured unchecked down her cheeks once more. She should have retaliated, should have fought back, but she suddenly felt too numb to move, to think. Two people in the world who seemed to genuinely care for her and not expect anything in return were gone. Her desires to rejoin the battle and deal out death where warranted had vanished, only to be replaced with a coldness, an utter lack of feeling, that she welcomed like an old friend.

Ron shot another curse at her and Lucius raised a shield around them, pulling her body against his own and holding her closely to him, offering her comfort and protection in the midst of all the chaos that swam around her. Before even he could return Ron's curse, however, she heard the words that were sitting on the edge of her of own tongue yelled from another.

"Avada Kedavra!" Voldemort hissed, a jet of green light catching Ron in the side. His gaze landed on her as the life fled his body and he crumpled to a heap on the ground.

Harry screamed.

"I have had enough!" he said loudly, bringing everyone to a stand still once more as they all turned to stare at him with surprise. Waving his wand around the room, Hermione noticed with horror that he had frozen them all into place. She couldn't even lift her fingers, let alone utter a curse or hex should he need her. However, her body was still pressed firmly into Lucius' chest and she felt a small shiver of comfort and even warmth rage its own battle within her.



"Be still and do not fight the feeling, love," Lucius whispered softly.

Her eyes were forced straight in front of her, and she saw Harry standing several feet in front of the veil, his own eyes watching Voldemort walk around him even as he found himself unable to move. The more he fought the Restraining spell, the tighter it seemed to close around him. His right hand clutched the Sword of Gryffindor tightly, and Hermione could almost see his mind working frantically to think of a way out of his current situation.

"Harry Potter," the Dark Lord said smoothly, his silky voice washing over her in spite of the situation. "We have come to the conclusion of our long journey together and, as I have always known would happen, I am victorious. And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives," he quoted, twirling his wand in his hand absently as he continued to walk around the frozen form of his enemy. When Harry's eyes widened in shock at the words, he continued, his lips turning up into a cruel smile. "But he will have power the Dark Lord knows not. How very convenient, don't you agree, Harry, that one of the few people Dumbledore allowed you to trust with such important knowledge is one of the few people you turned against." He glanced at Hermione and she saw Harry's eyes flick in her direction, betrayal written clearly across them as he blinked rapidly, tears forming against his will when he realized Hermione had told Voldemort the contents of the prophecy.

"However," Voldemort continued, his voice now directed at the others as well, "your loss has become my gain, and the brightest witch of her age has joined me. You see, Harry, you may assume your strength, your power that I know not, is love, but I ask you, when you turn away so easily from one whom you love and who loves you in return, how do you expect to defeat me? This foolish emotion that Dumbledore made you believe in so strongly has now led you to your death. Do you not feel ashamed, Harry Potter, knowing that your own mother gave up her life for you so that you may so easily, so foolishly, fall before me? And, as you stand before the veil where you have lost not only your godfather, but your werewolf as well, do you find strength in the love you had for them?" he spat, the word like a disease on his tongue.

Harry glared at him and Voldemort waved his wand slowly. "Pardon my thoughtlessness. If you wish to move, it will require use of your body." Harry moved his head, but it appeared the rest of him had yet to be released from the spell as he looked around for Remus.

"Remus?" he croaked through his clogged throat, and Hermione felt her own chest constrict as well at the reminder of his death.

The Dark Lord walked closer to him, sliding his wand against Harry's cheek and shaking his head slowly. "Pity," he said softly, "had you joined the right side, I could have made you greater than you've ever dreamed. You've had dreams, have you not? Dreams of my power, of my possession? Dreams that left you panting for more?" he asked, his eyes roaming Hermione once more.

"SHUT UP! Just shut up!" Harry screamed suddenly, his calm resolve broken as the message began to make sense to him. "Kill me. Do what you wish with me, but leave her out of this!"

"Come now, Harry, she is very much a part of this. I do believe, however, that it is time to end this little encounter." He then looked back to the sword. Pointing his wand at it, he silently called it to him only to glare at Harry when the sword didn't respond.

Harry smirked. "Didn't you know, Tom? Only a true Gryffindor can call the sword to them. I daresay your dead Basilisk could be of some use to you now, if I hadn't killed him years ago."

"I always knew you were intelligent, Harry," he commended. "However, Salazar's Basilisk was more than equal to Gryffindor's sword; you were just lucky. You may have killed the snake, but you will still die this day."

His wand swiftly pointed at Hermione and she felt herself floating out of Lucius' arms and towards the other two. She landed beside the Dark Lord and he immediately released her bindings, leaving her to stand on her own directly in front of Harry. As they looked at each other and silence reigned in the room, Hermione simply felt detached yet again. She stood before Harry, someone she had known since she was eleven, someone she had loved, cared for and nurtured, and

yet, his betrayal ate so strongly at her that she couldn't force herself to feel anything.

Harry looked away, his eyes following Voldemort as he circled them slowly. He gasped in surprise, and Hermione turned to look when she heard several others mimic Harry's astonishment. Standing beside her now was Tom Riddle, the man she had come to know as no other had. He was still Lord Voldemort, yet, he was not.

"Call the sword to you, Hermione," he said softly.

Hermione held out her hand and Harry closed his eyes as the sword flew from his fingertips into her outstretched palm. Then she turned towards Tom, a small smile on her lips as she looked at him.

'Hermione, no!!'

'Severus?' she asked, showing no emotion on her face, but allowing him to feel the relief that swam through her body when she heard his voice again and knew he was alive.

'Do not do this, Hermione. You are better than this; you are so much more!'

"Do you see now, Harry?" Voldemort asked silkily, his voice as cold in this form as it was in the other. "It is not about love, but about power. It is between those who wield power and those too weak to seek it." He turned to her then, his fingers gently caressing her cheek, and she found herself leaning into his touch. "Do not turn your head away, Harry Potter. You are to be commended for her position as much as myself. Perhaps, if the future Queen of the Wizarding World would like, she may have the honour of killing you herself." Slowly, as if knowing he was breaking the man before him, he lowered his head and kissed her, a soft brush of his lips against hers that he held for several moments. She vaguely heard the surprised cries from people she used to know before Severus' desperate, pleading voice broke through once more.

'Hermione, you can't do this. You mustn't!'

'It is too late, Severus. What is done is done.'

Harry's voice was sad, forlorn, and his tears could be heard in his tone, breaking the hearts of many in the room as he spoke his next words. "I would rather die by her hand, Voldemort, than by yours. At least with her, I know it is justly deserved...that she kills me for betraying all that we had, for the love that I so carelessly threw away." He turned toward Hermione then and added softly, "And I do love you, Hermione."

Voldemort raised his head and looked down at her, an icy expression on his face when he turned towards Harry, but spoke to her. "Do it, my queen. Kill Harry Potter and end this war once and for all, so that we may rule the world as it was meant to be ruled."

His queen? Hermione smiled as she looked up at him and then nodded her head. Turning to Harry, she took in his appearance for the last time: the wounds covering his body, the pain etched in his face...and the love for her that shone in his eyes. He watched her with a look of peaceful resignation on his face, and she knew he felt as though this is what he deserved, and rightfully so.

"I'm so sorry, Harry," she replied quietly as she steadied the sword in her hand.

"It's okay, Hermione." She heard sniffles around the room, grown men trying not to cry at the impending death of Harry Potter and the new fate of the Wizarding world. "I'm just glad it's you."

Turning back to the Dark Lord, she smiled softly before saying, "This is for you, Tom."

"Hermione! NO!" she heard Lucius yell loudly.

Then, calling on her powers and revelling in the darkness as though it were her lifeline, she thrust the sword forward with both hands, lodging it deeply inside the man before her. Every occupant of the room gasped or shouted in surprise or outrage and, when she looked up, the Dark Lord's face was one of complete shock and painful

anguish. They both allowed their gazes to drift down to the sword buried in his chest before they met each other's eyes again.

"Tim molisje," he groaned softly before grabbing her upper arms and pulling her to him.

She felt entranced by his stare, by her own actions, and even as the voices of Severus and Lucius screamed in protest, joined by Harry's own stunned voice, she allowed Lord Voldemort to pull her with him, throwing them both into the veil that lay only feet behind him.

AN: I am SO sorry if some of you thought the last chap was the, well, last chap. This story ends at Chapter 28 (with Fool Me Twice) and yea, I cried! Imao! Hope you enjoy and please tell me what you think. I never knew reviewers were so absolutely wonderful and I'll be adding more stories soon!!

Hermione felt as though the breath had been sucked from her body while someone painfully extracted her bones as well. She couldn't breathe, couldn't scream out from the painful sensations, and she certainly couldn't stop herself from being dragged into the abyss with him.

Her body spun like a top, clutched tightly by the arms in the vice-like grip of Tom's hands. How had it come to this? How had she--the Gryffindor Princess, the bookworm, best friend to the Boy-Who-Lived, prisoner of Lucius Malfoy, whore to the Dark Lord himself, and a dark power in her own right--gotten herself into this position? Another spasm of pain racked her body and she fought off a wave of nausea that the spinning seemed to cause.

After moments that felt like several eternities, Hermione's feet landed with a thud, only to have a sharp, hard object hit her chest as the force of Tom's body slammed into her. She staggered backwards several steps before gaining her balance and supporting his weight as well. When she felt him retake his own weight, the painful object on her chest left as well. The sword, she thought absently. She, however, clung to him as a lifeline while her head continued to spin and her stomach threatened to return the remnants of her last meal.

"Remove yourself from my person," he hissed, making Hermione jump out of his arms quickly, even as she rubbed her chest to relieve the pain left behind by the hard metal of the sword's end. The Dark Lord's gaze slowly swept from her face to the blood covered sword lodged in his own chest. "Extract your precious sword or I shall melt it," he snarled menacingly.

Hermione tentatively stepped forward, her shaky hands gripping the ruby-encrusted hilt of Godric Gryffindor's sword as she willed her heavy breathing to return to normal. With a grunt, she pulled it swiftly from his chest and watched as one of his elegant, pale hands

instinctively lifted to clamp on top of the wound. When he groaned and stumbled slightly, she remembered the sword had an interwoven layer of Basilisk venom and that it had been used to destroy the Horcruxes. Disgusted, she threw it to the ground, the sound of clanging metal slightly muffled. When she glanced down, she realized with a shock that the floor resembled a slivery, cloudy substance, yet felt solid beneath her.

There should be more blood, Hermione thought with slight detachment as she looked back up at Tom. It was as though the shock from the last several hours was most prevalent in her mind, and had somehow cut off her ability to think rationally. Somewhat sardonically, she realized that the lack of bleeding helped to alleviate her own guilt. She had stabbed him, had run a sword straight through his chest in the hopes of killing him once and for all, killing a man she had almost convinced herself of having feelings for. His death would come, of that she was sure, but she found herself glad to be putting it off for as long as possible, though she was not quite sure why.

Taking a small step closer, she softly said, "Tom, I-"

"Take in your surroundings, Hermione." He interrupted her as though he did not wish to hear her confession or her guilt. His voice was rough from the pain but his face was eerily kind in expression, and she realized he had had that look often while they brainstormed together in his chambers at night. "You are inside the veil. Do you not wish to sate your never ceasing curiosity? To learn something more while you still have the chance?"

The realization that she, Hermione Granger, was currently stuck behind the veil struck her momentarily dumb. When she looked around, it was to realize that she was no longer as detached as she thought and that he was right about her curiosity, so she greedily took in her surroundings. There was a complete mix of normal things inside the large bedroom-size, stone room that made no sense to her whatsoever. A roaring stone fireplace sat against the far right wall. To the left stood spectator benches much like she assumed the ones in the Death Chamber had once looked like, prior to the years of wear that had taken their toll. Against the back wall, along the corner with the fireplace, stood a hodgepodge of what appeared to be large

boulders, chairs and tables completely obstructing her view of that corner of the room. When she saw the skeletal remains of humans, she outwardly shuddered. At the other corner, close to the benches, stood a tall, heavy looking wooden door.

"There's a door," she muttered out loud before striding across the room towards it. When she grasped the iron handle and tried to turn it, a groan lodged in her throat. "It's locked."

"Perhaps you can use that detestable sword to pry it open," Tom suggested quietly. "Although, I do fear that the room was not called the 'Death Chamber' without just cause."

"You could be right. Still, I don't want to give up until we have exhausted every..." Her voice trailed off as she glanced to the one side of the room she hadn't looked at yet. She had been so distracted by the door that she had failed to consider the possibility of returning the same way from which they had come. Standing before her, set off parallel to the wooden door in the back, was the entrance from the veil, a shimmering door-like structure that emitted strange whispery noises and sent out actual sparks of magic from its frame.

Shaking her head as if to clear the overwhelming whispers, Hermione lifted her hand and tried to Summon the sword. When it only vibrated, she tried again.

"It would appear things are rather unhurried in here," she sighed, walking back to the Dark Lord and bending over to pick up the bloody sword.

Tom eyed the sword menacingly. "Yes, the progression of the blood from my body is not as it should be."

Was that relief? She looked at him a moment, realization stunning her. "Your only fear is death," she stated plainly, but the sudden anger radiating from him was unmistakable.

"I fear nothing," he said sharply. "And I will not die. Did you honestly believe that you, a Mudblood, could kill me? That there was even a



small chance of my demise? I have taken measures to assure that will not happen.”

Her eyes widened slightly at his words, but then her own anger surfaced, even as she willed the image of his increased breathing and his bloody hand from her mind. “Your Horcruxes have been destroyed. You yourself have felt the effects recently. Now, I am going to try and find a way out of here. You are free to either come with me or stay where you are.”

She palmed the sword and walked towards the door. At first, she tried to use it for leverage, willing it to turn the knob that refused to turn. In her frustration, she thought of using the chairs and table to hurl at the door, only to realize that was probably the reason why they already lay broken and shattered in the corner. More skeletal remains caught her eye and she paled suddenly. Remus had gone through the veil moments before she had, yet he wasn't here. Sirius had went through years before, but he wasn't here either. Were those remains theirs? Her eyes clouded with tears and she choked back a sob. Oh gods, Remus! she thought, her tears spilling down her cheeks as she realized with quiet finality that he was gone...the proof lying before her.

That was not to be her future! She had suffered enough, by Salazar, and she'd be damned if she'd wind up a pile of bones in a room, locked with Tom for all eternity simply for the sin of almost loving the man she had wished he could have been. He, however, was not that man; that man was Lucius, had always been Lucius.

With renewed strength, she shoved the sword between the jamb and the door, willing it to crack open. She gasped in surprise, however, when the sword started to smoke and she slowly removed it, only to find the entire end had melted completely.

The whispers were becoming increasingly annoying, and she tried to shake the sounds from her head again as she glared at the veil. One voice was louder than the rest and decidedly male, along with the most annoying of all. Still, she concentrated on her task and looked back to the sword, a far away memory tugging at her mind. Then she understood. Harry had used his pocket knife to try to open the Room

of Love that day in their fifth year and it had melted just like this sword. Was it possible that that room lay behind this door?

Tom coughed harshly, and her eyes snapped back to him. Blood was trickling from his mouth, and she found her heart breaking slightly as remorse for all her actions set in. Forgetting the door for the time being, she rushed to his side only moments before his weak body staggered backwards against the wall. He was close to death, yet he looked nonplussed by it all.

The locked door behind them creaked open and she felt a twinge of pain until a strange wave of ultimate calm filled her completely for several seconds. Voldemort, however, roared in agony until the door was closed, and the feelings left both of them panting slightly. An acrid smell consumed her nostrils and she realized with revulsion that there were now gaping wounds along his legs, visible only through the burned holes of his once elegant robes.

She turned to the door quickly when the strange feelings settled and her body returned to normal, ready to fight whatever was to come next. Upon seeing the figure standing before her and shaking his head as if in confusion, she squealed in delight and rushed forward, throwing her arms around him and sobbing openly on his shoulder.

“You’re alive!” she sobbed over and over before he slowly unwound her arms from his neck and smiled down at her.

Pushing a lock of hair from her face, he whispered in a hoarse voice, “Yeah, I think I am.” Concern quickly replaced his happiness as they walked further into the room. “How did you get in here? What happened?”

A growl from across the room caught both of their attention. “Can you not die, wolf? Is it a physical impossibility that allows you to live through everything?”

Remus gasped in surprise when he saw the man slumped against the wall, blood caked around his hand and down his robes even as the gaping wound along his midsection continued to ooze, something akin to a snarl and a grimace gracing his rather human face. As

Remus walked towards him, Hermione caught his wrist and shook her head.

"He's bleeding, Hermione, the least we could do is help him."

"You don't want to help him, Remus," she said quietly.

"Is that..." he started, looking from the man to Hermione and back again, eyes wide in sudden understanding. "And you..."

"Yes," she whispered, before smiling at him again. "Where have you been? What's through that door? I tried to open it, but I couldn't."

"I have no idea. When I went through the veil I felt a pain worse even than my own transformations, but when I landed and came to, I was in a different room than this. I felt safe and happy; I felt content for the first time in my life. Then, suddenly, a door opened and I was forced through it, right into here. Where are we now?"

"I don't know. This is where we landed when we came through the veil."

"How did you-"

He was cut off by the sound of the door creaking open once again, and she felt the same rush of pain, then contentment, that she had felt previously. Before she could look, the Dark Lord gave another roar and she saw him clutch his chest and his face contort in agony.

It was the figure standing before her, shutting the door and staring back at her and Remus, that held her attention, however. "It can't be," Remus muttered, his eyes even wider as he stared at the man before them.

"Sirius?" Hermione gasped. There was no mistaking his identity; he looked exactly as he had the day he had gone through the veil all those years ago.

"In the flesh!" he grinned, his eyes only on Remus. "Oi, Moony, why the look and who's the bird?" When she looked at Remus closer, she

noticed that his face softened in a way she didn't recognize. "Been gone awhile, huh?"

Remus tried to speak, but his voice was lodged somewhere in his throat and he simply nodded. Hermione, however, noticed the same soft look on Remus' face that had been on Sirius'. He simply nodded again, and they both walked closer to each other as she watched them curiously. When they embraced, both with tears beginning to well up in their eyes, she simply stared. Their embrace was so personal that she found herself feeling like a voyeur. They separated slightly, Remus' arms remaining around Sirius' waist even as their foreheads stayed touching, and Sirius held on to Remus' shoulders tightly. Hermione gasped loudly when they leaned forward, their lips hungrily seeking out the other's as they moved even closer and moaned in turn. Dear gods!

A groan from beside her pulled her attention away from the two apparent lovers and she saw Tom slowly slide down the wall to land on the floor, his back still propped up against the hard stones and his breathing shallow and irregular. "Tom!" she yelled, running over to kneel beside him as she took his cold, bloody hand in her own. Grotesque blisters now covered his entire body, and she noticed with a shudder of revulsion that his extremely tattered robes were smoking slightly. How could this have happened? What could have caused such a reaction in his body?

"You look like death warmed over, mate," Sirius said cheekily, as he looked down at the injured man with a young woman he now recognized as his godson's best friend.

"Ah, Black," Tom said silkily, his voice smoother than Hermione would have thought possible given his current condition. "The one who got away."

"Got away? What are you on about? I've been trapped in some weird room; nice room, granted, but weird."

"Um, Sirius," Hermione said shakily, looking from Remus to Sirius, "meet Tom Riddle."

“Tom Riddle? Now why does that sound familiar?”

“It’s Voldemort,” Remus replied through gritted teeth.

Sirius shut his eyes, only to open them wide as Remus’ words truly sunk in. “Voldemort?”

“In the flesh,” Tom replied coldly, mimicking Sirius’ own words.

“You bastard!” Sirius screamed, lunging towards him with fists raised, only to be held back by Remus. “Let me go, Remus! I’ll kill him! I’ll kill him with my bare hands!”

Tom chuckled, but it was Remus who responded. “He’s already dying.”

“That’s not good enough!”

“Do calm yourself, Black,” Tom scoffed. “Hermione has already had that pleasure, haven’t you, pet?”

Hermione winced at the name, even as his finger lifted and shakily stroked her cheek before falling back down to his lap. She refused to look at Remus, choosing instead to simply nod her head. “You made me choose. You took away all I had until you were the only thing left. I couldn’t let you win. I’m sorry.”

“Do not cry for me, tim molisje. I told you I will forever be in this world.”

‘Hermione, damn it! Answer me!’

Hermione jumped as though someone had shocked her, the whispers in her head finally breaking through as Severus’ voice became clear.

‘Severus? I’m here. We’re in a room through the veil.’

‘Thank Merlin you’re alive!’

There was a light pause and then he continued.

‘Your words are too rushed, slow down. We’re thinking of a way to get you out. I know you just went through, but hang in there and I’ll get you out! That is, if I can keep Potter from going in with you.’

Another pause. ‘Interesting. The Aurors have been called. Rodolphus has disappeared, but the other Death Eaters have been detained. Do not break this connection, Hermione. I need to think for a moment.’

Turning back to Dark Lord, and noticing the strange looks on their faces, she simply shrugged. “I am not crying over you, but for fear that you speak the truth, for regret of the things I’ve done and the way I hurt those I love.” Turning back to Remus, she quickly wiped her eyes and said softly, “Severus says the others have been detained and the Aurors are on their way. Harry’s a bit upset.”

“Severus? Harry’s fine?” Sirius asked in confusion. It was obvious he was confused about the way she spoke of Severus, but overjoyed that Harry was alive.

The Dark Lord eyed Sirius coldly once more. “Did you honestly think that Severus would betray me? Did you believe he would stand with that oaf Dumbledore when he could stand at the right hand of power?”

“No, I thought he was a greasy git who-”

“Shut up, Sirius,” Hermione hissed.

Tom continued. “Hermione has taken a special liking to my most loyal, Black. You do not wish to offend her. Ask your wolf; her wrath is a thing of beauty.”

“He’s not loyal to you,” she whispered.

Tom chuckled and smiled slightly, his appearance now that of Lord Voldemort and not of Tom Riddle. Sirius and Remus gasped, but she

simply shook her head as he spoke with venom in his voice that failed to frighten her. "He is loyal to me! He has always been loyal to me!"

"No," she repeated. So sure was she that he would die soon that she was willing to tell him everything, to reveal where his perfect plan was frayed slightly...a fray that had cost him his life, his power. "You lost Severus Snape the minute you ordered Lily Potter to death. He loved her like no other and you killed her."

Again Sirius and Remus gasped, Sirius sputtering indignations that Hermione chose to ignore. "I told him I would spare her, but he understood when I could not. She was simply a Mudblood."

"It doesn't matter," she replied. "When she died, you lost Severus. It is through him that you lost everything. And you should know by now, there is nothing simple about Mudbloods."

"When this is over, I will kill him myself," he hissed, believing her words even without proof. "Lucius will do nicely as my second in command, even if he has failed in the past."

"Bloody Malfoy git. Where does he fit in to this?" Sirius snarled.

"Perhaps, Sirius," Hermione admonished, "if you would be so inclined to shut your mouth and listen, things would become surprisingly clear."

"She has a special bond," the Dark Lord hissed angrily, surprising jealousy clearly underwriting his words, "with Lucius as well. It's sickening the way he was panting after her."

"Lucius Malfoy has never panted after anyone. But, you lost him as well," she said, her tone even as she continued to tell him of his own misgivings.

"Liar!"

"No, Milord, it is not a lie. When you ordered Draco killed, Lucius made a vow and joined the Order in exchange for his son's life." She

missed Sirius whisper a questioned "Milord" to Remus as she concentrated solely on the man before her.

"But he came back to me."

"Yes, because Draco Malfoy is a git," she said with an angry smile. "Because power meant something to him and he was not old enough, not tainted enough to realize what the rise to power would cost him. I saved his life before and I will be forced to do so again I'm afraid."

"You? You are nothing but a filthy little Mudblood! What could you possibly have done to undermine me? Before attempting to kill me first, that is."

"Everything." She sighed, knowing she might as well continue. "I took your Mark in exchange for their protection because, through it all, they were the only two who stood by me, who protected me. I have been betrayed by everyone save them and Remus. I vowed to myself that no matter what happened, no matter what I had to do, I would protect the three of them with my very life. There were times I worried about myself, times when the darkness became too much to bear and I was sure I was lost, but it was always a look or touch, or even a forceful admonishment from those two that brought me back to myself. I did not pick a side, I selfishly chose those around me that I cared for and condemned the rest. My darkness isn't natural, Milord, and I have the ability to fight it. Your darkness is who you are, and you cannot fight that which is your very being. A seventh of your soul is all that survives and, once you die, you will be truly gone from this world."

A mirthless laugh filled the room and Hermione felt her blood run cold. She had been afraid he was planning something all along, and now she was certain of it. He slowly began to stand, his body shaking as it was forced to support his weight.

"You cannot learn everything from a book, or from a deranged old man, tim molisje. I will admit that with you, things were different than with any other, but you were simply a means to an end. Simply a way to torment Potter and nothing more."



"Do not lie now, Milord, it doesn't suit you." Certain realizations of her own slowly crept into her intelligent brain. Love was Harry's weapon...the room behind her contained love...the room behind her caused him deep agony.

He chose to ignore her. "As long as Harry Potter lives," he replied haughtily, even as his legs began to shake more and his colour faded to a blue-white like none she had ever seen, "then I too shall live."

She knew it was coming, could tell by the way he gathered his magic and tried to use some of hers as well that he was planning something colossal. Would he kill them all now to end his own suffering? To die on his own terms only to be reborn like he had been before? Would he use Harry again? His magic gathered and began to entwine within his hands.

'Severus! You must send Harry through the veil! You must do it now!' she screamed through their bond, her voice full of panic as she tried to rush to the heavy wooden door, only to be held back by Voldemort's grip on her robes. She fought him. If she could open the door and allow the force of love to overtake him, she could end this now. The pain she had felt each time it had opened was from her own darkness, and she knew she would die with him; she only hoped the room would understand, that it would open for her.

'I will not!'

'You must, Severus!'

'This is insane, even for you.'

'We don't have time, and this is the only way to truly stop him! Send Harry through the veil now! And Severus, tell Lucius I love him, that it has always been him for me and no one else.'

'Hermione, what-'

'NOW SEVERUS! DO IT NOW!'

Voldemort's magic began to glow in his hand like a ball and with the other, he quickly grabbed Hermione's hand, stealing her magic as he drew on his own and the ball turned to a brilliant blue, only seconds before Harry's scream broke into the room and he landed near them. He began chanting words in an old language that she couldn't understand and his entire body went rigid. The door to the Room of Love, apparently sensing her need, her will, opened of its own accord, and both she and the Dark Lord screamed in agony. Sirius rushed over to Harry as Remus tried to pull Hermione away. A moment later, fire burned up her arm as the ball held in his hand exploded.

AN: This is it, the very last chapter of my very first chaptered story. I admit to it having a bittersweet feeling for me! However, I've written many more since and I still love this one! I'd really like to know what you think about, not only the chapter itself, but the story as a whole. (I did notice in rereading this before posting that, during the posting process, the format changes a bit. I hope if that happened in previous chapters you were able to overlook it without much difficulty!)

Also, just a quick note...Granger Enchanted is my 'home page', meaning it's where I post all my fanfiction first. I have several more stories up there that aren't up on or . If you're interested, check them out!! I LOVE that site!

Now, enjoy the ending of Filthy Little Mudblood!

Severus stood completely still, fear and guilt gripping his chest and making it hard for him to breathe. Only decades of experience as a spy left him able to separate the emotions running rampant within himself and the duty he still had to Hermione. People rushed all around him--some screaming orders, others begging for their lives or freedom--but his own mind was fully concentrated on the anomaly known to him simply as 'the veil'. The only other presence he remotely acknowledged was Lucius, who was at that very moment crumpled to his knees, the pain and devastation of his loss written clearly on his usually stoic features.

'Hermione, damn it! Answer me!'

'Severus? I'm here. We're in a room through the veil.'  
he shouted for the hundredth time.

He jerked back as though stabbed by a knife through his head, her voice rushing at him faster than normal and making him quickly cover his ears before he realized it was her. He recognized, or assumed he did, that time would have two different definitions for them, and hers appeared to be the faster one. Harry screamed again, and Severus glanced in his direction, noticing that he was fighting against a one-

armed Shacklebolt in an attempt to get to the veil himself. Bloody ridiculous git.

‘Thank Merlin you’re alive! Your words are too rushed, slow down. We’re thinking of a way to get you out. I know you just went through, but hang in there and I’ll get you out! That is if I can keep Potter from going in with you.’

“What is it, Severus?” Lucius asked, his face now the fake picture of indifference those around him had come to expect from the prestigious pureblood, his slightly tangled hair the only thing detracting from his impeccable appearance.

“She is alive,” he hissed.

“Thank Salazar,” Lucius murmured with emotion, but kept quiet otherwise as he watched Severus closely and waited with patience honed by decades of training.

‘Just? Are you serious? I feel like it’s been hours. The Dark Lord is dying slowly, and Remus and Sirius are both in here with us.’

Great, Lupin and Black had survived, his day was now complete. The sarcastic thought filtered into his brain before he began to wonder exactly how it was possible for those two to still be there. ‘Interesting. The Aurors have been called. Rodolphus has disappeared, but the other Death Eaters have been detained. Do not break this connection, Hermione. I need to think for a moment.’

How could he get her out of there? If Black had been trapped in the veil for all these years, surely there was a way, knowing that someone on the outside was actually able to speak to someone on the inside. The question was, could it be done and, if so, how could he do it without losing his own life? Still, her life was more important than his own; his purpose had been fulfilled and there was little left for him now.

Her panicked voice cut through his thoughts and he struggled to keep up with her words. 'Severus! You must send Harry through the veil! You must do it now!'

Send Harry Potter through the veil? Had she gone mental? Or perhaps, as he had feared only hours ago, she had indeed traded sides. NO! He refused to believe that of her, but still, how could she ask such a thing of him?

'I will not!'

'You must, Severus!'  
he replied heatedly, his patience at the situation wearing thin.

"What is it, Severus?" Lucius asked quietly so as not to draw unwanted attention to them.

"Potter. He must go through the veil as well."

'This is insane, even for you.'

'We don't have time and this is the only way to truly stop him! Send Harry through the veil now!'

"She says it's the only way," he said to Lucius, unsure exactly whom he was trying to convince.

'And Severus, tell Lucius I love him, that it has always been him for me and no one else.'

"And," he added impatiently, his gaze already roaming the bustling room in search for his target and finding him sobbing over the dead bodies of the Weasleys, "she also says that she loves you. Apparently, it has always been you."

Lucius stood dumbfounded at the declaration. No matter how harshly the words were spoken, he heard only her soft, passionate voice speaking them as she caressed his cheek with her soft fingers. Severus, however, refused to allow him the pleasure and spoke quickly, his voice cutting, yet slightly hesitant and unsure. "Keep them away from me until it is done."

'Hermione, what-'

'NOW SEVERUS! DO IT NOW!'

He tried to ask, only to have her interrupt him.

He tried Banishing Harry quickly, but only served to catch his attention. Bright green eyes bored into him as the young man stood up and walked closer.

"You need something?" he asked warily, while he wiped all evidence of emotion from his face.

Through closed lips, Lucius murmured, "Together," and Severus nodded his agreement.

Severus looked at Harry and saw, for the first time, the man before him and not the reminder of his father. He also saw the eyes of a woman he had once deeply cared for. "Forgive me, Lily," he said through a cloud of emotion, as both he and Lucius pointed their wands at the Saviour of the World and sent him, wide-eyed, into the veil.

Within seconds, strong arms wrapped around them both, forcibly removing their wands before binding both their submissive bodies and their magic.

Suddenly, a bright light shone from the veil, catching everyone's attention moments before it exploded and sent them all staggering backwards. When Severus looked back to the veil, dread churning in his stomach, it was to see Sirius Black holding the body of Harry Potter, but his accusing gaze bored directly into Severus himself. That failed to bother him nearly as much as the need to find

Hermione. When his eyes swept to the left, his heart jumped to his throat. Remus Lupin was openly weeping over Hermione's lifeless body...the Dark Lord was nowhere to be found.

"HERMIONE!" Lucius screamed loudly, fighting desperately to reach her as an Auror began roughly dragging them both out of the room, all the while hissing about Death Eater scum. Severus' only concern was that Hermione was, once again, not answering his call.

She hated it. She didn't even know what the 'it' was she hated, she just knew she hated it with an unrelenting passion. And the voices! Gods, would those damnable voices never cease? Were they so completely moronic that they could not tell she was lying there and hating them for breathing?

Hermione took a deep breath and let it out slowly, willing her body and her anger to calm down to a reasonable level. The darkness must have invaded her more fully while she had lain unconscious, and now it was threatening to take over. Still, she fought for herself, for her humanity, and, before long, she lay quiet and peaceful.

"I know you're awake, Hermione."

Her eyes opened slowly, and she waited impatiently for the blurriness to dissipate before looking around the room. Remus and Sirius were sitting on the bed beside hers, Kingsley had taken up a post near the door as he stood and observed those around him and Harry was sitting on her bed, his hand holding hers and a sudden look of relief showing on his handsome face.

"Hello, boys," she said sweetly, before dragging herself up to a sitting position and wincing at the stiffness in her body. "And thank you for pointing out the obvious, Remus."

"You're welcome," he said, a smirk gracing his handsome, happy face as he looked at her. It was then she noticed Sirius' hand on his thigh and realized they must be open in their relationship at last.

Sirius followed her gaze and chuckled. "I think I've lost too much time to hide what makes me happy now."

"Agreed," she said.

Kingsley cleared his throat, and they all looked at Harry, his expression slightly ashamed and regretful. "What am I missing?" Hermione asked coldly, finding it harder to fight the darkness now than ever before. "Think it will take the four of you to send me to Azkaban?"

"That's not something to joke about, Hermione."

"Who said I was joking? You all know where I've been, what I've done. Unlike Severus and Lucius, I didn't decide to turn good."

"You're not being sent off until we know all the facts, Miss Granger," Kingsley said coldly.

"I'm not? Seems to me," she said, looking pointedly at his now missing arm, "that you've already found me guilty."

"In my opinion, you are guilty, but not of the charges actually put against you. You are guilty of selfishness, of acting the part of the gods, but not of being a Death Eater or of the attempted murder of Harry."

Hermione chuckled, a cold, mirthless sound that made them all cringe as she eyed her Dark Mark. Instead of fighting the darkness inside her now, she felt as though there was something else, something new growing deep inside her; it felt cold and dark, and she revelled in it.

"Playing the gods? Hardly. But attempting to kill Harry," she said, looking at her friend without regret, "possibly."

"Lucky for you, the two who actually committed the act have already been detained and thrown in Azkaban for the rest of their miserable lives," Sirius grumbled.

"What?!" Hermione snarled angrily, as she jumped from the bed and wandlessly transfigured her hospital robe to witches' robes. Turning



to the other four, she added in a cold, dark voice that surprised them, "I am the one who told Severus to send Harry into the veil, I am the one who made the decisions of what we were doing, and I am the one who made it happen! If anyone is to be punished, it is to be me and NOT them. Is that understood?"

"Are you forgetting you do not have the power here that you think you do?" Kingsley asked.

"I believe, Minister, that I have more power than you realise. I have the power to kill the four of you where you stand before you could even raise your wands in defence. I also have the power to break them both out of Azkaban and hide us all. However," she added, willing herself to calm down, "I can refrain from such acts for the time being."

"Hermione, please. Just answer our questions and we'll go from there. You're not going for a full trial due to the nature of your involvement, so it's up to us to figure out what happened and then come to an agreement," Harry explained.

"Haven't Remus and Sirius already told you what you needed to hear?"

"They've told us their part; now it is your turn."

"And I'm supposed to believe you would be understanding, Kingsley? No matter how close we once were, it's obvious you blame me for what happened to you."

"I will be objective. I haven't forgotten our past, Hermione; I simply wish to understand your present." His tone was softer, and she felt her anger dissipating slightly. "What was the nature of your relationship with You-Know-Who?"

Rolling her eyes at his continued refusal to say the name, she sighed before responding. "Complicated. However, my relationship is of no consequence to the charges and will not be discussed."

"That's fair," Remus interjected.

"Fine," Kingsley's agreement was reluctant at best. "What is your relationship to Severus and Malfoy?"

"When I was taken, Lucius took care of me. He kept me safe from the others, and I began to care for him. Severus and I share a bond that can't be readily explained using the simple terms of English. But we do share the ability of telepathy and can hear each other's thoughts."

"Why was Harry sent into the veil then? If it was at your command, as you say, what was your reasoning?"

"Simple. I knew the Dark Lord wished to kill himself rather than to die by my hand. When he finished discussing his plans for rebirth, I knew Harry was the key and that he must die with Remus, Sirius, and myself. I didn't know we'd survive, but I did know that Harry would rather die himself than allow the Dark Lord's return."

"She's right, I would. I didn't know there had been a part of him in me until I regained consciousness. I always battled with this darkness inside myself and now," he said with obvious relief, "it's not there. I just feel like myself. I can grieve for our losses and know that the emotions are mine, and mine alone."

Kingsley nodded and continued. "Why did you fail to save the members of the Order you swore to protect when you were inducted?"

She laughed coldly once more. "Save those who abandoned me? Do you think I cared any longer about their fate when it was the Dark Lord that remained my main target? Do you think the option to kill Harry would have been afforded to me had I saved the life of a blood-traitor?"

"So you were simply playing a part? When your best friend stood before you and was killed by You-Know-Who, you showed no remorse at all!"

"OF COURSE I DIDN'T! He was going to kill me, and, had the Dark Lord not have killed him first, I would be dead now. I was too shocked

by what I thought were the deaths of Severus and Remus to even react to Ron's curses. The Dark Lord was protecting me when he killed Ron."

"Protecting you? Why?"

"That is what I said. As for why, you'll have to ask him that yourself."

"We can't. He is gone, along with his body."

"His body is gone as well?" she asked, showing surprise for the first time since she recovered.

"The room exploded and knocked you and Harry unconscious," Sirius explained. "When we began looking for him his body had disappeared, just like before."

"Why is that?" Kingsley asked her.

"Does it look like I know?" she snapped. "I've answered your questions. Now, either release Severus and Lucius or prepare my cell next to theirs. I do not abandon those loyal to me just because the situation is undesirable," she hissed coldly, making Harry flinch.

"Kings, you can't charge her for saving the world. It may not have happened the way we all thought it would, but it did happen, and we have her to thank for it," Remus said, his voice soft yet stern as he faced the Minister of Magic as the Leader of the Order; two powerful and respected men only seeking the truth.

"You're right, of course," he relented at last. "Did Severus or Malfoy do anything untoward during the battle?"

"No, they merely deflected curses or sent badly aimed ones," Remus answered, his voice leaving no room for argument.

"Then they are to be released. Hermione, go home, clean yourself up, and I will bring you their papers. I dare say you want to personally see that they are released."

“Bloody right, I do,” she said, disappearing on the spot and leaving them all staring gobsmacked at the place she had just vacated. St. Mungo’s had the best anti-Apparation wards, and Hermione had treated them as though they were nothing.

Reappearing at the Manor, Hermione quickly made her way from the Dark Lord’s chamber to the Sitting Room just beyond. She was met by a rather angry, rather large snake that she had learned not to fear. However, upon seeing Nagini, Hermione felt her eyes burn and the darkness surge through her. Instead of hatred, though, she felt a connection with the loathsome snake. Surprisingly, Nagini bowed her head and slithered away; to where, Hermione knew not.

She quickly forced herself to the dungeon, before walking to Draco’s cell and calling to him. “Wake up, you prat. You missed all the fun,” she taunted.

“What do you want now, Mudblood?” His eyes widened when she waved her hand in front of the door and the lock clicked open.

“What I want, Malfoy, is to kill you in the most foul way I can imagine. What I will do, instead, is keep my promise to your father and send you away.”

“What? You can’t!” he squeaked, scooting closer to the wall as if to get away from her.

“You’re going to Atlantis, and that is final. The Dark Lord has fallen, and you won’t be safe anywhere the Ministry can find you. When the dust has settled, so to speak, your father and I will come for you. In the meantime, you’ll remain there, trapped and living as a Muggle on an island even the Muggles that could help you cannot find.” She grinned wickedly before raising her hand and laying it on his shaking shoulder. His eyes grew fearful, and she found the expression made her intensely happy.

“You...your...but your...” he stammered as he stared at her in shock.

“My what? Never mind, your distractions won’t work. Good bye, Draco.” Removing her hand from his shoulder, she snapped her

fingers and watched as he disappeared before disappearing herself to the library. Her research notes would still prove useful, and she couldn't risk anyone else finding and destroying them.

As she began collecting her things, the door opened and she glanced up into the eyes of a very angry and murderous looking Rodolphus.

"What is it?" she asked heatedly, shrinking her books, along with several others.

He raised his wand quickly and a Binding curse flew in her direction. With a smile and casual flick of her hand, the curse was deflected easily, and she glared at him.

"You betrayed us! Because of you the Dark Lord is dead!" His eyes were cold, even though slight shock registered at her gesture.

Her anger was fierce as she stared at him without an ounce of fear. "The Dark Lord is gone, not dead. And you would do well to-"

"Sweet Salazar, forgive me!" he gasped, before quickly dropping to his knees and bowing before her.

To say she was confused would be an understatement, more so when the Death Eaters behind him also bowed before her. She had learned a thing or two from her dark lover and, without missing a beat, while thanking the gods they didn't all draw their wands on her instead of bowing, Hermione said coldly, "All of you go. The Ministry will be looking for anyone with a link to our Master and, if found, you will be prosecuted fully. I have managed to convince them to release Severus and Lucius and, when the time is right, our Lord will come for us again. Go quickly, and remember him!" she hissed, watching as they bowed their heads and then turned away. She smiled as she watched them leave, intoxicated from the power that commanding others gave her.

Taking the rest of her belongings, she quickly Apparated to her father's rooms and held onto him, his face a mixture of surprise and love as she Apparated them both to Grimmauld Place, shocking Kingsley when she appeared directly beside him.

"I hope you did not assume this to be my home. Do you have the papers?" she asked without preamble as her father stumbled into the room and looked around.

His brows were furrowed as he handed them over with his remaining hand. "Right here. You shouldn't encounter any problems. I have sent an owl ahead of you so that you may-

"Hermione!"

Looking over quickly, she barely caught a glimpse of red before Ophelia threw her arms around Hermione and hugged her tightly. "I'm so glad you're here, that you didn't leave without me! When are we going?"

A grin overtook Hermione's face and she nodded slowly.

"Can you leave now?"

"Of course!"

"Great. Give me just a minute." Hermione closed the short distance between her and Kingsley, looking at his wary face, but remembering their past. He had let her go free against his better judgement, as well as Severus and Lucius, and she had the power to reward him. Power. Reaching out and feeling slight irritation at the way he flinched away from her touch, she waved her hand along where his arm should be, silver strands flowing from her fingers and weaving themselves into a new arm.

With a gasp of surprise, he flexed his new arm experimentally before scowling. "I did not ask for this, nor do I want it. Practice your magic in front of me again, and I will rescind your pardon and throw you in Azkaban."

She laughed softly. "That is not Dark Magic, my friend. It is simply magic. Feel free to look it up, and make sure you take care of my parents in the meantime." Her irritation flared, and she felt her eyes burn.

Grabbing Ophelia's hand, she nodded goodbye to the others and, as her eyes met Remus', she almost missed the same shocked and horrified expression on his face that she had been seeing entirely too often in the last several hours. Without a sound, the two women were gone, only to reappear on the outskirts of Azkaban.

"We'll walk in from here. I'd hate to surprise them and have a wand happy Auror curse us."

"Have you talked to him? Does he know we're coming?"

"No. As long as he's in Azkaban, I can't reach him. When they come out, he'll see you. I daresay he'll be thrilled to know you came of your own free will."

"Snarky git grew on me," she muttered, a slight blush trailing up her cheeks that made Hermione laugh outright. "It's a British thing, I think," Ophelia added quickly.

'Severus, do you think you can walk any slower? If you leave me alone with her much longer, I may very well make you a widower before your wedding.'

"Hermione!" He said her name as though he'd been doing nothing but waiting to hear her voice, but failed to realise she couldn't hear him from this far away. 'Who are you talking about?' he asked, using the connection he knew she could hear.

She laughed to herself as she imagined him rolling his eyes. Down the stone lane, just as she had expected, two figures were walking quickly their way. When they suddenly stopped walking, she looked at Severus again before her eyes locked on Lucius and her feet picked up speed without her acknowledgement. He was stunning. Fresh out of a prison and the man looked ready to attend any number of pureblood functions. Her eyes burned again, but this time, the feeling was caused only by the tears that came unbidden and

threatened to damage her newly self-proclaimed 'cold and powerful witch' title.

Lucius stopped in his tracks and stared at his friend. Two days, two long, disastrous days where he had finally convinced himself that his witch was dead and his life was not worth living except for his son, only to hear Severus was calling out her name as though he expected her to answer. When he saw the expression on the cracked man's face, he followed his gaze. His breath flew from his lungs as he stood there, staring at the witch quickly walking towards him. His witch.

When they were only meters away, Ophelia squealed loudly, making Hermione wince at the noise as her one true female friend threw herself into Severus' arms, wrapping her legs tightly around his waist as she kissed him hard. When they broke apart, Hermione nodded slightly to him and he smiled in return, before taking his wand from Ophelia's hand and Apparating them both away. Words were not needed between them, they never were; their bond was stronger than that.

"Where have they gone, do you suppose?" Lucius asked quietly.

"I have no idea. Wish he would have told us though. That's somewhere I want to avoid for a good long while."

They were nervous and making idle chit-chat. It was a bit comical, two powerful beings nervous to be left alone with each other, forced to finally admit to the other what they had barely admitted to themselves.

"Come here, witch," Lucius said gruffly. Pulling her to him, he whispered into her ear. "I thought I lost you. I thought...it no longer matters," he said, holding onto her tightly as he looked longingly into her eyes.

Hermione held on to his broad shoulders and smiled up at him, her heart lighter than it had been in months as his lips slowly came down to caress hers. When he pulled back slightly, she smiled again. "I have missed you, my love," she whispered softly.



“And I you.” They kissed again, their lips growing more demanding, their bodies more needy the longer they remained touching until, after a strong squeezing sensation, Hermione felt herself being laid down on a bed. Looking around in surprise, she saw an immaculately decorated bedroom and Lucius standing over her, setting his wand on the table as she tried to remember ever giving it back to him.

“Welcome to your new home, love,” Lucius whispered, his own body coming above hers and his lips teasing along her neck. “What is mine now belongs to you. All I ask in return is your loyalty...and your heart. You belong to me, witch, and I could not bear for another to touch you.”

“Do I get the same in return?” she asked, her hands trailing along his chest as she unfastened his robes. His gaze snapped to hers. “I have already told you, Lucius, your material possessions mean little to me. If I cannot have the promise of your loyalty and your own heart in exchange for mine, then I want nothing at all.”

His voice was clogged with emotion when he looked in her eyes and replied, “All that you ask is yours.”

Then he kissed her again, a kiss so full of emotion and words that she felt her heart beating inside her chest for the first time and knew her fate with this man was sealed. She had always belonged to him, but now he, too, belonged to her. There would be time later for her to tell him about Draco, for them to decide where to go from there. Until then, she wanted to kiss this man and feel his lips on hers for eternity.

She didn't know that his thoughts had strayed in the same direction. His own heart was beating in tune with hers, and there was so much he wanted to say, but didn't know how. However, he would wait. He would wait to tell her she was no longer a filthy, little Mudblood, no longer a slave or a Death Eater. He would wait, and when the time was right, he would tell her that he loved her, that he would be by her side for the rest of their lives. Nothing would change that, he silently swore, even as her eyes blazed red while she looked at him. He would love her.